



The South Asian



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The West Coast is Burning

Nearly 70 active wildfires have burned hundreds of thousands of acres, and are still raging along the US West Coast. These fires have produced the worst air quality on the planet.

Story on
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The breakdown with China

Bridging the power gap with China

Trump knew exactly how serious Covid-19 is, but downplayed it

America remembers 9/11, 19 years later

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Fever FM Announces Alliance with Radio Zindagi, America's #1 & the Biggest South Asian Radio Network

Fever FM to produce LOVE YOU ZINDAGI an exclusive Bollywood themed Breakfast show for Radio Zindagi listeners in the USA, Canada and South America.

Fever FM, India's leading CHR radio station, today announced a unique partnership with Radio Zindagi, America's # 1 and the biggest South Asian radio network. Having transformed the radio listening experience in India, Fever FM announced entering into an alliance with Radio Zindagi Network starting with a freshly minted breakfast show titled 'Love U Zindagi'.

Conceptualized and produced for the influential South Asian diaspora in the US, Canada and South America, Love U Zindagi brings the best of both radio and Bollywood together, in a unique double header show hosted by Fever's popular RJs - RJ Manasa and RJ Yash.

Announcing the partnership, Harshad Jain, CEO - Radio and Entertainment, HT Media Ltd and Next Mediaworks Ltd. said, "This



is our pioneering foray into international market. While we have had content syndication arrangements with global media houses before, but with Radio Zindagi we will be co-creating and producing radio and digital content specifically catering to the likings and tastes of South Asian community abroad. This will give us access to a large and diverse audience as well as an opportunity to show case our breadth of creativity". Streamed live from Fever FM's studio in India to Radio Zindagi's frequencies in East Coast (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, DC, Maryland, Virginia and Toronto between 8 and 11am

EST, and in Mid-West (Chicago, Houston, Dallas & Austin between 7 and 10 am), Love U Zindagi' is a quirky, irreverent and fun take on life for the thriving South Asian community. It is for people who love their lives, yet long for some 'Indian-ness'; a little spark of 'desi' to liven up their mornings, be it while driving for work or enjoying a leisurely breakfast at home.

Speaking about the show, Sunil Hali, (Promoter), Radio Zindagi Network said, "Love U Zindagi is a landmark show for us. We are partnering with Fever FM and HT Media Group to bring to our audience a high quality content that will be entertaining, engaging and informative to begin

their day with. The program format is unique, something our audience hasn't experienced before. The content is best of east and west. With this, we will also be able to give a platform not just to US-based brands but also to Indian advertisers to connect directly with the South Asian community in the USA."

Taresh Anand, the CEO of Radio Zindagi said, "We are delighted with to be collaborating with

HT Media group promoted FEVER FM to get the best morning content for our listeners in the US. Love U Zindagi with Manasa and Yash has the perfect blend and chutzpah for a vibrant morning drive. The show has a great mix of the latest top of the charts Bollywood hits as well as a delightful camaraderie and chemistry between the two RJs making it an enjoyable show to tune into your morning drive to work or any other destination. With this relationship both media brands have leveraged into each other strengths to bring the best possible entertainment in the industry. Nilesh Dasondi, Director at Radio Zindagi

said, "This is unprecedented in South Asian entertainment. We at Radio Zindagi have redefined music, entertainment and talk in this part of the world. We are pioneers, and now with Love U Zindagi, we have confirmed our leadership in South Asian Radio broadcasting". Love U Zindagi will be live on Radio Zindagi's frequencies WBWD 540 AM in New York, New Jersey & Connecticut; 96.7 FM in Edison, New Jersey & WXMC 1310 AM in Central Jersey) from September 1, 2020, and will be streamed across Toronto, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Chicago, Houston, Dallas & Austin.

About Fever FM

The Fever Network (operated by HT Media Ltd.) comprises of three distinct radio stations - Fever FM, Radio Nasha and Radio One. While Fever FM and Radio Nasha are leaders in the Hindi Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) and Retro Bollywood space respectively, Radio One is a pioneer in the International format.

Cricket Match Between The Empire State Titans and The New Jersey Stallions

(Press Release) New York : Fourteen teams will take the field for the first time this weekend, with 12 matches scheduled to take place in four regions across the country.

These matches are aimed to provide MiLC teams with some cricket in 2020, with the inaugural full season of Minor League Cricket then set to commence next year in Spring 2021. The first balls will be bowled in New York Saturday morning (10:00am EST), with the Empire State Titans hosting the New Jersey Stallions at Idlewild Park in Queens, NY. USA cricket board member Ajith Bhaskar said this is major stepping stone for cricket in USA. This will give more opportunities for local talent.

Who : The Empire State Titans and The New Jersey Stallions

Where : Idlewild Park in Queens, New York

When : September 12th 2020, Time- 9:30 AM



Scholarships under the AYUSH Scholarship Scheme for the academic year 2020-21

(Press Release) New York: Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi is offering AYUSH scholarships for studying undergraduate, post graduate and Ph.D courses related to Yoga, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy in Indian universities/institutes/colleges. The applications will be accepted online only through the portal <http://a2ascholarships.iccr.gov.in/>.

Detailed guidelines including terms and conditions on the process of applying for ICCR scholarships online are available on www.a2ascholarships.iccr.gov.in. However, the salient features of the Scheme are mentioned below. The last date for uploading the application by the applicant is July 31st, 2020.



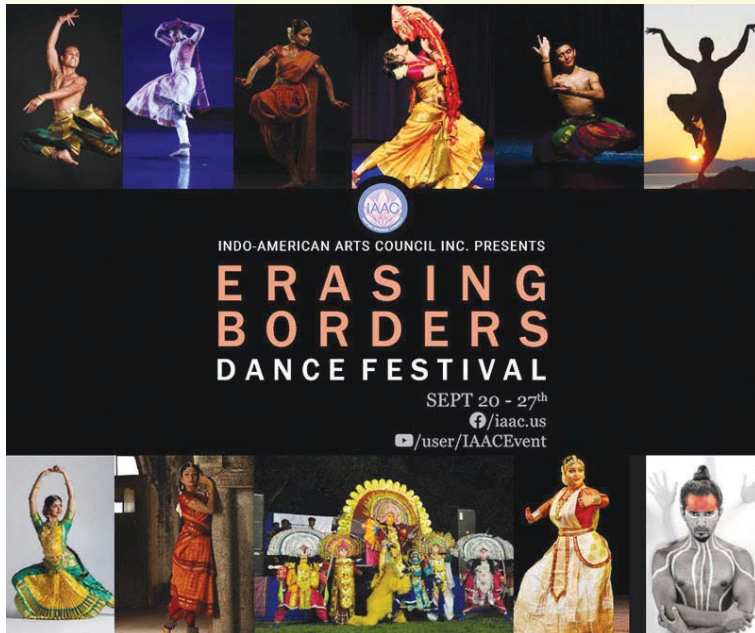
1 in 7 children faces hunger.

There's more than enough food in America for every child who struggles with hunger. Help get kids the food they need by supporting Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks. Together, we can solve hunger™. Join us at FeedingAmerica.org



Erasing Borders Dance Festival

September 20-27, 2020 at 8:30pm EST each day for free
on Facebook Live at facebook.com/iaac.us.



a dancer, painter and actor, described by The New York Times as "a tour de force...a true act of transcendence...", "as mesmerizing as staring into the heart of a fire", by The Dance Current Magazine, and with a "capacity for intense involvement" by The Hindu. Belsaré studied Bharatanatyam in India under Sri Shankar Hombal at the Kalapadma Academy, under Padmashri Geeta Chandran at the Natya Vriksha Academy of Performing Arts and continues learning with New York based Maya Kulkarni and creating new dance works inspired by classical visual arts/architecture, Sanskrit literature and Greek mythology/philosophy.

Her solos were seen at The Lincoln Center, Asia Society, Alvin Ailey (NYC), The Lincoln Theater (Washington D.C.), Siri Fort (New Delhi), The Harbourfront Centre (Toronto, Canada), and MFA Boston among others.

With a classical Indian training in music, dance, painting, theater, and both Indian and European aesthetics, her work derives inspiration from performing and visual arts alike. Belsaré is also an art educator and curates educational programs based on contemporary art. She is recipient of the Cambridge Arts Council's Artist-Grant, the Government of India's Sahitya Kala Parishad scholarship for advanced training in Bharatanatyam and Indian classical music, and the New England Foundation for the Arts DANCE grant. Invited artist-residencies and talks include Georgetown University (2019), UC Berkeley (2019), California Institute of Integral Studies (2019), Drexel University (2019), William Paterson University (2019), MIT Cambridge, MA (2019) and Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2019/2010) among several others. More information is available at www.mesmaBelsare.com.

Krishnakshi Kashyap (Sattriya) is a Sattriya dancer, educator, choreographer, cultural and social ideapreneur. Sattriya dance is 500 year old living tradition practiced in Sattras-monsatic communities of Assam.

A recipient of the Young Talent Artiste Award by NEZCC, Ministry of Culture, Govt of India, she was conferred the Dalmia Cement Young Achiever's Award 2020 for her exceptional achievements in the field of art and culture. As a practitioner-performer, she promotes Sattriya Dance, the 600 years old living tradition of Assam,

a state in North East India. Trained under renowned Gurus Shri Ramkrishna Talukdar, Shri Jatin Goswami and Smt. Indira P. P Bora, Krishnakshi has performed Sattriya on various prestigious platforms across the country. She is a graded artiste under Prasar Bharati, India's largest public broadcasting agency. Under her initiative 'Empowerment through Arts', she teaches Sattriya to underprivileged girls, adding color to their lives and empowering them. Krishnakshi has started an initiative, 'Promote the Heritage Culture - Sattriya' and conducts Sattriya online workshops.

Arun Mathai (Bharatanatyam) was first exposed to Bharatanatyam while watching his older sister in class, and would often imitate the moves he witnessed, using the coffee table as his stage. Encouraged by his parents he started studying at Kala Vandana Dance Center, in San Jose, California, under the rigorous but loving guidance of his guru, Smt. Sundara Swaminathan.

After obtaining his BS in Business Administration Arun joined LA-based Blue13 Dance Company and soon became a principal dancer. He also began traveling abroad to study with respected teachers and perform. In addition to his guru, some of the renowned instructors Arun studies with include: Smt. KP Yasodha, Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan, Smt. Bragha Bessell, Sri Hari Padman, and Smt. Viji Prakash.

Currently a freelance artist, Arun is also the Budget Manager at LACMA, is pursuing his MBA at UCLA Anderson, and is a part-time lecturer at USC's Gloria Kaufman School of Dance.

Neha Mondal Chakravarty (Kalakshetra Bharatanatyam) hailing from India, New Delhi, is a Bharatanatyam performer, teacher and choreographer, who currently resides in Singapore. An alumna of Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai, Neha was trained by stalwarts like Shri A. Janardhanan, Sheejith Krishna, Smt. Jyotsana Menon and Ms. Leela Samson. Her experience with Kalakshetra's repertory company, under the guidance of Leela Samson transformed her into a subtle and thinking dancer. Neha worked as an empaneled "A" grade artist with the Ministry Of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi.

Her inclination towards body awareness led her to train rigorously in jazz, contemporary

dance, and somatic techniques. She received junior and senior scholarships in Bharatanatyam from NCERT and Ministry Of Culture. Neha moved with her husband to Kuala Lumpur in 2014 and later Singapore. Neha has performed extensively in South East Asia, USA, UK and Europe. She now trains serious practitioners of the art form

Vishwakiran Nambi (Contemporary) is a performer, choreographer, dance filmmaker, academic and Director of LOKA Studio for Movement Practices and the driving force behind Vishwakiran Nambi Dance Education (VNDE). He was the principal dancer, head of training and one of the principal choreographers of 'Nritartya Dance Company' for over 10 years. His training is diverse ranging from Indian classical forms to Indian folk and martial dance forms. Though his foundation is in contemporary dance and Bharatanatyam, he constantly trains and explores the folk dimensions of South Indian dance and trains extensively in martial forms. He has been a solo performer for over 5 years now and has choreographed and presented his solo 'Stone Unturned' at the prestigious ADA Rangamandira in Bangalore as part of ADHYAYA 2017. He has, from then onward, choreographed multiple short pieces for Nritartya and later independently created his own repertoire. His vision is to explore the possibilities in Indian dance framework particularly with the vast folk landscape. His creations are mostly experiences of regional authenticities and existential peculiarities.

Shambhu Nath Karmakar (Ashpara Care Club/Purulia Chhau) is a Purulia Chhau artist trained in the region's traditional martial and acrobatic dance form under guru Dhananjay Mahato. He has received national scholarships in dance from Ministry of Culture, New Delhi. He is involved in Purulia Chhau performance, training, workshops, exhibitions, and competitions. He and his group Ashpara Seva Jatna Chhau Training Center has been invited to various national and international festivals including Japan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and others. He has established Seva Jatna Chhau Institution to teach the youth this martial dance form and to deepen their connections to their cultural roots.

For the twelfth year of the Erasing Borders Dance Festival, IAAC has expanded the event. For the first time, eleven artists trained in Indian dance forms from across the world will be brought together in a virtual borderless festival. Details are available at iaac.us/erasing-borders-dance-festival-2020/.

Deepsikha Chatterjee, Festival Director stated, "Moving to a virtual format has its own artistic challenges, but we believe it opened up many possibilities. Our artists are from across the world, representing many of India's dance forms. Bringing them together on an online platform was not only the most responsible and exciting way of showcasing their work but also displaying the virtuosity of diversity." Sunday, September 20, 2020

Shambhu Nath Karmakar/Ashpara Care Club (Purulia Chhau)

Monday, September 21, 2020
Neha Mondal Chakravarty (Kalakshetra Bharatanatyam)

Krishnakshi Kashyap (Sattriya)
Tuesday, September 22, 2020
Ganesh Vasudeva (Bharatanatyam)

Wednesday, September 23, 2020
Divyaa Unni (Bharatanatyam)

Arun Mathai (Bharatanatyam)

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Sandhya Raju (Kuchipudi)

Friday, September 25, 2020

Damir Tasmagambetov

(Kalakshetra Bharatanatyam)

Barkha Patel (Contemporary

Kathak)

Saturday, September 26, 2020

Mesma Belsaré (Shilpa Natana)

Sunday, September 27, 2020

Vishwakiran Nambi

(Contemporary)

Workshops by Nahid Siddiqui (Sufi

Kathak)

The Festival dancers, turned away from traditional performance spaces, take the time to reflect, activate, and energize through other forms of healing. Mesma Belsaré seeks inspiration in the fluid lines of India's ancient architecture while

Singapore-based Neha Mondal Chakravarty meditates on a tiny seed sprouting into the fullness of womanhood in Bharatanatyam. Vishwakiran Nambi collects his contemporary group in the urbanscape of Bengaluru to use their bodies in deeply felt and original ways. Arun Mathai draws power and energy from The Great God Shiva against the Black Lives protests in US for his Bharatanatyam performance. New Yorker Damir Tasmagambetov from Kazakhstan, trained in Kalakshetra Bharatanatyam in India bridges many cultures, and concludes his creative presentation through a prayer for Shanti or peace. US based Kathak dancer Barkha Patel is nourished by her week-long walk in Gujarat in prayers for Goddess Bahuchara Maa, a deity for the transgender community in India. Divyaa Unni in Bharatanatyam depicts the unusually calm Goddess Kalika, who appears with neem leaves and holy water this one time to bring balance and tranquility back. Kuchipudi dancer Sandhya Raju's solo presents Lord Krishna, the one who lifted the Govardhan mountain to provide much needed shelter. Her Tarangam dance piece on a brass plate, built through years of training provides much needed charm. Ganesh Vasudeva's Bharatanatyam depicts the Ganga River flowing down from the icy Himalayas, believed to be Lord Shiva's locks of hair, into nourishing rivers and streams. Assam's Sattriya dancer and social entrepreneur Krishnakshi Kashyap reflect on the centuries old meditative performances of the region while Purulia Chhau artist Shambhu Nath Karmakar marches with his ensemble in the traditional acrobatic martial art form to show Goddess Durga vanquishing Mahishasur, the bull demon to restore peace and prosperity.

About the Artists

Mesma Belsaré (Shilpa Natana) is

Strategic Paris-Delhi-Canberra axis gets off to a flying start amid China tension

French President Macron was among the first to call for the strategic alliance to respond to challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and the growing assertiveness of China

(News Agencies)- India, France and Australia on Wednesday jump started a new strategic alliance proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron two years ago with the first meeting of top foreign ministry officials of the three countries. Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region got the top billing at Wednesday's meeting held over video conference.

The officials spoke about "enhancing maritime security cooperation" including maritime domain awareness, mutual logistics support and capacity building of other friendly countries in the Indo-Pacific region, people familiar with the matter said. There was broad agreement among the three partners that they should look at a multi-polar

world where countries join hands for mutual benefit and support rather than a unipolar or multipolar world.

China did figure in the discussions but the meeting wasn't focussed on one country. It took an overarching view, one Indian official later told Hindustan Times. The virtual meeting was co-chaired by foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, secretary-general in French ministry for Europe and foreign affairs François Delattre and secretary in Australian department of foreign affairs Frances Adamson.

French President Macron was among the first to call for building a strategic alliance between the three countries that could respond to challenges in the

Asia-Pacific region and the growing assertiveness of China. On a visit to Australia before he flew down to India back in May 2018, President Macron had spoken about the need for the partners to 'organise' themselves. "We're not naive: if we want to be seen and respected by China as an equal partner, we must organize ourselves," President Macron said in a speech at an Australian naval base. "This new Paris-Delhi-Canberra axis is absolutely key for the region and our joint objectives in the Indian-Pacific region," he said, according to a 2018 Reuters report. On the India leg of his trip, President Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a blueprint to step up cooperation in the Indian Ocean to counter



China's growing influence in the region. "The Indian Ocean, like the Pacific Ocean, cannot become a place of hegemony," President Macron said as the two countries signed pacts that gave Indian warships access to French naval bases in the Indian Ocean.

At Wednesday's meeting, Indian foreign secretary Shringla underscored PM Modi's vision for the Indo-Pacific that he had articulated at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018 to promote the

concept of Security and Growth for All in the Region or SAGAR. The three countries also discussed cooperation on marine global commons - blue economy, marine biodiversity and environmental challenges such as marine pollution. Shringla spoke about India's interest in collaborating on sustainable fisheries in the Indian Ocean, technologies for harvesting of Deep Ocean Resources and Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion.

Rhea Chakraborty retracts confession in drugs case, says she was forced by NCB



(News Agencies)- Actor Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik have approached the special court under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act for bail as their pleas were rejected by the Magistrate court on Wednesday.

Showik Chakraborty, Sushant's house manager Samuel Miranda and Sushant's domestic help Dipesh Sawant, and Bandra residents Zaid Vilatra, Abdel Basit Parihar who were arrested for allegedly peddling drugs were produced before a magistrate court which sent them to judicial custody till September 23, said NCB officials.

They have all applied for bail but the matter has been adjourned till tomorrow.

In her plea, Rhea has stated that she is innocent and falsely implicated in the case. Further,

it is claimed that Rhea "was coerced into making self-incriminatory confessions and by her application on September 8 the applicant has formally retracted all such incriminatory confessions".

The actor's bail plea too was not accepted by the court after the prosecution raised objections regarding jurisdiction of the magistrate court to hear her plea. Questioned for three days by all levels of officers of the NCB from September 6 to 8, Rhea was formally arrested on Tuesday. "There was not a single lady officer who interrogated the present applicant as mandated by law. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Sheela Barse VS State Maharashtra, has held that the interrogation of females should be carried out only in the presence of a female police officer/constable," reads

Rhea Chakraborty's bail plea was not accepted by the court after the prosecution raised objections regarding jurisdiction of the magistrate court to hear her plea.

the bail application, highlighting that the agency failed to comply with the guidelines of the apex court. The sister-brother duo has been booked under Section 27 A of the NDPS Act which provides for punishment for financing illicit traffic and harbouring offenders. As per the provisions, if found guilty the two can face

imprisonment not less than 10 years and can also be fined Rs 2 lakh. They have been arrested for allegedly arranging a narcotic substance for actor Sushant Singh Rajput. After the bail pleas were turned down by the magistrate court, the 28-year-old's lawyer Satish Maneshinde approached the special court.

The pleas are scheduled for hearing on Thursday where the investigating agency would be required to file their reply before the special court. The defense has raised the issue of applicability of charges of Section 27 A of NDPS Act against the two. In Rhea's plea, the defense has stated,

United States keeps India on 'do not travel' advisory list

(News Agencies)- The United States on Wednesday took Pakistan and Bangladesh off its list of countries under "do not travel" advisories due to Covid-19, but kept India on it. The United States removed a Covid-19-related global "do not travel" advisory for Americans in August and switched to a country-specific system, working with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It had then kept most countries at "Level 4: Do Not Travel". On Wednesday, Pakistan and Bangladesh were among the six countries that had been moved to the category of less prohibitive "Level 3: Reconsider travel". The other four were Benin, Kuwait, Mexico and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. We continue to monitor health and safety conditions around the world, working with the CDC and other agencies, as conditions evolve," the state department said in a statement. India stayed at "Level 4: Do Not Travel".

"Do not travel to India due to Covid-19," the state department's travel advisory page said. "Exercise increased caution in India due to crime and terrorism." The CDC has advised American travellers that "Covid-19 risk in India is high. If you get sick in



India and need medical care, resources may be limited." We continue to monitor health and safety conditions around the world, working with the CDC and other agencies, as conditions evolve," the state department said in a statement. India stayed at "Level 4: Do Not Travel". "Do not travel to India due to Covid-19," the state department's travel advisory page said. "Exercise increased caution in India due to crime and terrorism." The CDC has advised American travellers that "Covid-19 risk in India is high. If you get sick in India and need medical care, resources may be limited."

Another testing high as Covid-19 cases breach 200k in Delhi

The Delhi government conducted a record 54,517 tests for Covid-19 on Wednesday. This was the sixth time in seven days that the city set a new record for daily tests, a statistic that highlights the magnitude of the increase in testing.

(News Agencies)- Delhi on Wednesday conducted a record number of daily tests for the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), and consequently reported its highest single-day cases as the tally of infections in the city crossed 200,000, making it the only city in India to breach this mark.

The Capital - the first Covid-19 hot spot city in the country to control the spread of the virus, but which has seen an increase in the number of cases in the past two weeks - reported 4,039 new cases on Wednesday, taking the total number of infections to 201,174.

The Delhi government conducted a record 54,517 tests for Covid-19 on Wednesday. This was the sixth time in seven days that the city set a new record for daily tests, a statistic that highlights the magnitude of the increase in testing. With 11,101 reverse transcription-polymerase chain

reaction (RT-PCR) tests, considered the most accurate method of diagnosing Covid-19, Delhi also set a record for the highest number of single-day RT-PCR tests. The previous record was set a day ago, when Delhi conducted 9,944 such tests.

Delhi's resurgence of cases had prompted Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on August 26 to announce the ramping up of testing to 40,000 daily samples to track, and isolate as many cases as possible.

As of Wednesday, the Capital has reported nearly 40,430 more infections than Mumbai, which has the second highest number of infections and 56,579 cases more than Chennai on the third spot. In total, Mumbai has reported 160,744 cases and Chennai has 144,595 infections till Wednesday night. All figures are according to the health bulletins issued by their respective state authorities. At

the same time, however, Delhi has tested 100,198 per million of its population as compared to 40,032 in Maharashtra and 73,252 in Tamil Nadu (updated individual figures of Mumbai and Chennai are not available).

These three metropolitan cities, which were the initial hot spots of the virus in the country, remain the ones with the biggest concentration of infections (and deaths).

To be sure, the district of Pune has more cases (212,563), than these three cities. However, only 119,291 of those are from the city of Pune and the remaining are from surrounding areas such as Pimpri-Chinchwad that fall outside of city boundaries.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said in a tweet on Tuesday: "Today, Delhi reported the highest number of cases - 4,039. But it also conducted the highest number of tests - 54,517 against 15,000-20,000 tests till



last week. If we were conducting the same number of tests (as last week), today's cases would be fewer than 1,500. So, don't be scared by the number of cases." On the back of the increased testing, the positivity rate in the city has again started dropping. Of the tests conducted on Wednesday, 7.4% came back positive. The average positivity rate, which had dropped from a peak of 31.4% in mid-June to 5.7% at the end of July, had been climbing again and was at 9% on September 1. In the past week, this has dropped to 8.2%. Overall, 10.6% of all tests done in Delhi have come back positive. Experts said the dropping positivity rate is a good indicator

for the city despite the rise in cases. A good indicator to see if a government is testing enough is to look at the positivity rate in the city. If the positivity rate is increasing then that means that there is increased transmission of the virus in the community. In Delhi's case this has been going down recently, which is a good sign. I will be happy if this drops below 5% for a period of two week, which is what the World Health Organization said is the threshold to show that the transmission of the virus is under control," said Dr Lalit Kant, former head of the department of epidemiology at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

PM Modi, Saudi King discuss global challenges amid Covid-19 pandemic



(News Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on Wednesday exchanged views on global challenges in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the state of relations between India and Saudi Arabia and committed themselves to strengthen cooperation in all areas, according to a statement issued after their phone conversation.

PM Modi expressed his special thanks to King Salman for the support provided to Indian expatriates by Saudi authorities during the pandemic.

He also expressed appreciation for the leadership provided by Saudi Arabia during its ongoing presidency of the G20. The leaders agreed that initiatives taken by the G20 had helped promote a coordinated response to the pandemic.

The two leaders also discussed the main priorities on the current agenda of the G20.

The Indian government has invested considerable diplomatic capital in recent years in improving ties with Saudi Arabia and other countries in West Asia, which is home to some 8 million Indian expatriates. Saudi Arabia is also among the top two sources of energy for India.

Numbers prove money given was 'niggardly', 'insufficient': Chidambaram on govt assistance

(News Agencies)- Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Wednesday attacked the government over its assistance to the poor under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, alleging that money given was "niggardly and totally insufficient".

The Finance Ministry on Tuesday said more than 42 crore people have received Rs 68,820-crore financial assistance under the government's Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana to protect the poor and vulnerable from the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

As part of the Rs 1.70 lakh crore PMGKP, announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26, the government announced free foodgrains

and cash payment to women, poor senior citizens and farmers.

Attacking the government, Chidambaram asked, "How much did each beneficiary get under the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana? Was it 'relief' in any real sense or tokenism?" Under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), 2.81 crore people got Rs 2,814 crore or Rs 1,000 per person, the former finance minister said and asked, "Could that sum have kept body and soul

together". "Jan Dhan account holding women (20.6 crore) got Rs 30,925 crore or Rs 1,500 each over three months. Could a homemaker have run a family on Rs 500 a month?" he said in a series of tweets.

"Migrants (2.66 crore) got 2.67 lakh MT of food grains over 2 months. That is 5 kg per month. Could it have sustained a migrant and his



family? The numbers prove that the money given was niggardly and totally insufficient," Chidambaram said.

"And certainly, the money could not have acted as a 'stimulus' to boost demand and revive the economy," he added.

Under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan', the government announced

supply of free food grains and chana to migrants for two months, and the estimate of number of migrants provided by the states was about 2.8 crore.

"During the distribution period up to August, total 2.67 LMT of food grains was distributed to 5.32 crore migrants. This works out to an average of about 2.66 crore beneficiaries per month, which is nearly 95 per cent of the estimated number of migrants," the ministry had said.

BJP, Shiv Sena lock horns over support to Kangna Ranaut

Devendra Fadnavis, a former chief minister and a BJP leader, termed the Sena-ruled Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s action against Ranaut's office as "state-sponsored terrorism".

(News Agencies)- After the Mumbai civic body demolished parts of an office owned by actor Kangana Ranaut, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) backed the film star in the midst of a raging political debate on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, Maharashtra's ruling Shiv Sena said the BJP's support to Ranaut was a conspiracy against Mumbai as well as the state. Sharad Pawar, a leader of Sena ally Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), said there was no need to take Ranaut seriously.

Devendra Fadnavis, a former chief minister and a BJP leader, termed the Sena-ruled Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s action against Ranaut's office as "state-sponsored terrorism".

"While one cannot support the statement made against Mumbai police or Maharashtra (by Ranaut), one cannot support such action by the government...Until yesterday, this construction was legal. You take action and point to illegalities only because someone spoke about you. Then what about other illegal constructions in the city?" he asked in a video message.

Speaking to reporters in Mumbai, Pawar said he had no information about the legality of the construction in question. "I read about it only in the newspapers. It won't be appropriate to comment on this without having proper information. Illegal work is not a

new thing in Mumbai. However, BMC's action in the backdrop of the ongoing situation (when Ranaut is locked in verbal spat with the Sena) allows people to raise doubts over it. BMC officials have their own rules and may have found it appropriate to take the action," he said.

"We are giving too much importance to the people making such statements. One must understand the impact of such statements on the people at large," Pawar added.

The Sena, meanwhile, took on the Union home ministry for providing Y-plus security to actor Ranaut two days ago, calling it an insult to Mumbai and its police. In an editorial in Sena mouthpiece Saamana on Wednesday, the



party alleged that the BJP's support to the actor looked like a "conspiracy". "There is always a danger to Mumbai because those who support disrespect to 'Mumbadevi' are sitting in Delhi and in Maharashtra's assembly...First, defame Mumbai, then weaken it. Make Mumbai completely bankrupt and then, one day, separate it from Maharashtra. It is clearly seen that these steps are being taken again," the Saamana editorial said. The Sena mouthpiece added

that the Maharashtra unit of BJP should not have supported the ones who referred to the chief minister in a disrespectful manner. Vivekanand Gupta, an advocate and a BJP leader, said: "BMC cannot demolish any property in view of the Covid-19 situation." He added that the Bombay high court, on March 26, put a restriction on carrying out demolition drives during lockdown and that the scope of the order was extended till September 30.

Mumbai Crime: 20-Year-Old Man Held For Cyber Stalking, 700 Nude Photos Of Girls Found From His Phone



Mumbai police's cyber unit arrested a 20-year-old boy, a resident of Gujarat, for stalking, blackmailing and spreading child pornography of girls aged between

9 to 15 years.

During the initial investigation, police found more than 700 nude photos of girls from his mobile phone which he managed to get

from them after hacking their Instagram accounts. The accused has been identified as Alfaz Jamani and he was arrested from Mahua village of Bhavnagar district in Gujarat. After finishing Class 12, Jamani left his studies and started working at an onion dehydration plant. Dr. Rashmi Karandikar, DCP (Cyber), told Mid-day, "On September 6, we received a complaint from the parents of the girls. The parents said that someone has uploaded nude pictures of their children on Instagram. All the girls are aged 9 to 15 years." After receiving a complaint, the cyber police started the investigation and traced the location of the accused in Gujarat. "We sent a team and arrested him. During interrogation, he revealed

that he used to send friend requests to minor girls and after they accept the request, he would start talking to them. He used to download the photos of the girls from their Instagram account and morph them and upload it on his other Instagram account," police said. After uploading the photos, the accused used to take a screenshot of it and send it to the victim, saying that someone has uploaded her nude photo and if she wants it to be removed she will have to share her username and password. "Once he gets the details, he would start talking with the girl's female friends from her account and ask them to share their nude photos and videos. He used to convince the girls for sending their nude photos and

videos by claiming to share details of medicine and diet for keeping the body in shape," police added. "We found out 17 fake Instagram profiles made by the accused which he used to become friend with minors," the DCP added. The cyber police have registered a case under Section 354 D (stalking) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Section 12 (punishable for sexual harassment), 13 (Use of child for pornographic purposes) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act and Sections 43, 66, 66 (a) of the Cyber law. In 2019, a case of cyberstalking was registered against Jamani in Pune and he was arrested. However, he was granted bail.

China deployed combat vehicles in Tibet plateau, reports state media

Combat aircraft, artillery, armoured vehicles and special forces from across China were deployed to the Tibetan plateau amid fresh tensions with India, state media reported on Wednesday in a rare acknowledgment of the massive mobilisation along the disputed border. China's official media usually highlights exercises in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) to reflect the country's military might along the border with India, as it did in August, and repeatedly

during the 2017 Doklam standoff. The more blatant show of military power - including sorties by fighter jets close to the border - is reserved for Taiwan, which Beijing describes as a renegade region to be unified by force if necessary. The words deployment and mobilisation are seldom used in state media reports in the context of the border with India. The news reports didn't specify since when the troops and equipment were mobilised from

different parts of China to the plateau. They attributed the movement of units to "renewed border tensions between China and India" over the past two weeks. The reports said troops, artillery and aircraft were moved to the plateau not only from different parts of China but from different theatre commands. The border with India is under the Western Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the largest of five commands covering the mainland. Several troop formations

in northwestern desert areas in Xinjiang and southwestern TAR were engaged in live-fire drills and complex manoeuvres. The nationalistic Global Times tabloid reported "bombers, air defence troops, artillery, armoured vehicles, paratroopers, special forces and infantry units" from across the country were mobilised to the border areas. H-6 bombers and Y-20 large transport aircraft from the PLA Central Theater Command Air Force were deployed to the plateau for training missions, the

reports cited the command as saying on Tuesday, a day after the latest face-off on the south bank of Pangong Lake. National broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) reported HJ-10 anti-tank missile systems attached to the PLA 71st Group Army were recently moved from eastern Jiangsu province to the northwestern Gobi desert, more than 1,600 km away. For PLA, it would be easier to dispatch troops and equipment to the northwest from the Gobi desert region.

Shirdi Saibaba shrine's income dips by Rs 174 crore due to lockdown, says CEO

Shirdi Saibaba shrine has been closed for devotees since March 17 in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

(News Agencies)- Coronavirus-induced lockdowns have affected the income of famous Saibaba temple here in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, a top official said on Wednesday.

On the other hand, there is a rise in donations made through the online mode compared to the corresponding period in the previous year.

The shrine has been closed for devotees since March 17 in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

"The shrine received the income

of Rs 115.16 crore from March 17 to August 31 this year, as against Rs 289.55 it had received in the corresponding period last year. This means the income has dipped by Rs 174 crore," Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust CEO Kanhuraj Bagate told PTI.

At Rs 94.39 crore, the maximum income was generated through the interest earned on fixed deposits during the lockdown period. The cash donations stood at 18.32 lakh, he said.

"The trust received Rs 11.47 crore as online donations

compared to Rs 1.89 crore it had received through online mode during March 17 to August 31, 2019" the CEO said.

Last year, the shrine had received donation of 8.868 kg gold and 194 kg silver jewellery, but during the lockdown, it received only 162 gm gold and 2.6 kg silver, he said. The trust spends Rs 55 crore towards management of the temple, he said, adding that an amount of Rs 13 crore goes towards the payment of 5,500 employees.



'Couple in love' garlanded with shoes, paraded in UP village



(News Agencies)- Twelve people were arrested in Kushinagar district of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday after a man and a woman were made to wear a garland of shoes and

paraded in a village there over an alleged affair, the police said.

The incident took place in the Hata police station area of Kushinagar and a video of it surfaced on social media, they added.

The man and the woman who resided in the same locality were supposedly in love, said police, adding that the family members of the woman opposed the relationship. When the man came to meet the woman on Monday night, her family caught hold of him and locked him up in

a room, the police added.

The 'sabhasad' (representative of the ward) is among those taken into custody, superintendent of police (Kushinagar) Vinod Kumar Mishra said.

"A video of Hata area of the district went viral on social media which shows that a woman and a man were made to wear a garland of shoes and with blackened faces they were paraded in the village. Police have taken cognisance of the matter and 12 people, including the 'sabhasad', have been taken

into custody," he said.

"Police are interrogating them. Strict action will be taken against the culprit," the SP added.

The representative of the local ward Hamid Ansari allegedly directed his associates to beat them, blacken their faces and forced them to march in the lanes of the locality.

During interrogation, Ansari gave information about his associates and local residents involved in parading the couple, said station house officer (Hata police station) Gyanendra Kumar Rai.

Maharashtra's SGNP, Tungareshwar sanctuary to get wireless communication network in 6 months

Network stations will be built at the highest point (altitude) mostly atop hills in Yeoor area of Sanjay Gandhi National Park and near Tungar Phata in Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Maharashtra forest department has proposed a wireless communication project for its frontline staff to enhance connectivity across Mumbai, Thane and Palghar forest areas. The move is intended to help monitor wildlife movement better and strengthen control of forest patches within the 103 sq km Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in Mumbai, the 85.7 sq km Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWLS) in Thane and Palghar districts, and improve supervision across fragmented forest patches leading up to the 304.81 sq km Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary in Thane district.

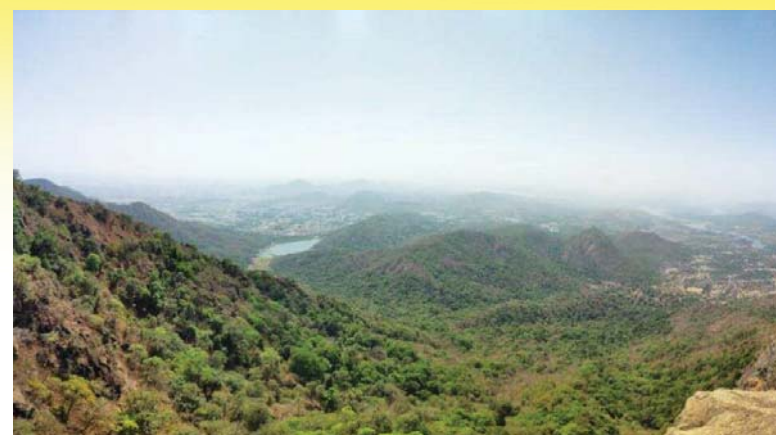
According to the forest department's plan, network stations (small control rooms) will be built at the highest point

(altitude) mostly atop hills in Yeoor area of SGNP and near Tungar Phata in TWLS. They will be connected to the primary control room at the SGNP, Borivali office. Additionally, every beat officer and forest guard would be equipped with hand-held wireless handsets.

The project is likely to be executed within the next six months, said Sunil Limaye, additional principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife-west). "The idea is to have one integrated system to connect each and every part of the national park which is currently inaccessible or does not have a mobile network. A survey is currently underway to determine the cost of the project and quantity of wireless devices

required," he said.

Currently, a conventional system using mobile phones are used by the department to communicate and coordinate cases of wildlife crime, tree felling, encroachment, setting up of illicit alcohol breweries as well as control attacks on frontline officers inside forests but owing to negligible network inside forest ranges, the deployment of support staff or other provisions swiftly across problem areas leads to operation inefficiencies, said forest officers. "There have been several issues in protection due to the present system (using mobile phones) and there is a need to strengthen it," said G Mallikarjun, chief conservator of forest, SGNP. "Similar to the joint communication (JC) strategy



implemented by the Mumbai police, our attempt is also to relay information and data on wildlife movement, status of water bodies, poaching incidents etc. not just within forest ranges in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region but connect to the Tansa valley landscape for overall corridor connectivity," he said. All major tiger reserves in Maharashtra as well as Tansa and Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuaries already have the wireless communication project in place. "In some cases

in SGNP and TWLS, forest officers have to rush from the scene of the incident to find a major road to find a network for reporting details. There have been isolated incidents of attacks on forest officers over the years as well, and this system will help increase their safety," said Limaye. In May, the forest department began an exercise to monitor forest areas using drones in TWLS. The project is yet to be replicated across SGNP and peripheral areas.

The breakdown with China

India must hope for accommodation, even as it prepares for confrontation

On Monday night, India repelled - yet again - a possible attempt by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) to intrude into Indian territory across the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This comes a week after India successfully resisted such attempts, and held on to strategic positions on the southern banks of the Pangong Tso. The escalation in tensions in eastern Ladakh is not surprising. With both armies, mobilised in large numbers and staring at each

other in close proximity, it is but natural that skirmishes will happen - especially when one army, PLA, wants to change the facts on the ground and force India to accept a new reality. It is also natural because over the

past fortnight, there has been a sharp uptick in rhetoric on both sides.

All of this indicates that the India-China relationship has broken down at two levels. The first is with regard to the border management framework that has been in place for close to three decades. It is clear that China no longer sees the advantage of maintaining peace and tranquility on the border - and is keen to maintain this peace only on its terms, after wresting territory over which it has no legitimate claim. This is unacceptable to India, and rightly so. The second is with regard to the broader framework of the relationship. For years, India has convinced itself that the dynamic with China has

both a cooperative and competitive element - and while this was true, it is also now clear that the competitive dynamic is on the ascendant, and is becoming sharply adversarial.

With external affairs minister S Jaishankar scheduled to meet his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, in Moscow on Thursday, it is this breakdown that must be the focus of the discussion. Is it the case that China has decided that it is comfortable with a hot LAC, and an outright adversarial relationship with India? If that is so - and the conversation will give the Indian establishment a sense of Beijing's mood - India has no choice but to prepare itself in the military, economic,



diplomatic domains and respond accordingly. Or is it the case that China has read Indian motivations wrong, that apprehensions can be allayed, and Beijing can be persuaded to disengage and de-escalate? If

that is so, it will help tackle the immediate crisis - even though the long-term orientation of the relationship will still be troubled. India must hope for accommodation, even as it prepares for confrontation.

Trump damns himself with his own words

Just two days ago, the Trump campaign blasted an Atlantic story detailing the denigrating language the President allegedly used about fallen American troops for its author's use of anonymous sources. "I think it's pretty clear here that journalism was abandoned," Trump 2020 communications director Erin Perrine said on Fox News, "that journalistic integrity has to be in question here when you have four off-the-record, anonymous sources who are trying to hide their identities instead of standing up to level such disgusting accusations against the President of the United States." Well, there's a new bombshell story out -- about other shocking and consequential remarks from this President -- but there are no "anonymous sources" bogeymen for the President or his campaign to blame. The damning words are recorded, not secondhand, and you can hear them coming from Trump's own mouth.

In excerpts from Bob Woodward's forthcoming new book, "Rage," the famed Washington Post reporter (and associate editor) reveals taped conversations he had with the President himself, on the record, about the seriousness of the coronavirus threat back in February and March. They are,



in a hyphenate, jaw-dropping. "You just breathe the air and that's how it's passed," the President tells Woodward on Feb 7. "And so that's a very tricky one. That's a very delicate one. It's also more deadly than even your strenuous flus."

That admission directly contradicts what he was saying publicly at the time and for weeks after, which is that Covid-19 was no worse than a seasonal flu, that it would soon miraculously disappear, and that masks weren't a necessary precaution. He also told Woodward in March that he purposely misled the public on the severity of the virus, saying, "I wanted to always play it down. I still like playing it down,

because I don't want to create a panic." It's hard, if not impossible, to wrap your mind around this callous and self-serving calculation, wherein the President admits to a journalist -- one with deep credentials, and who has already written a best-selling, behind-the-scenes look at Trump's White House -- that he's actively lying to the American people about a deadly pandemic that will eventually kill, as of this writing, more than 190,000 Americans and counting. But it takes a special kind of (in the words of Trump's own niece -- a psychologist) "sociopath" to decide to put protecting his own re-election

prospects over the health of thousands and thousands of people -- and then essentially brag to a journalist in real time that he's doing it.

To put that in perspective, according to just one analysis -- from researchers at Columbia University -- the US could have prevented roughly 36,000 Covid deaths and 700,000 infections if social distancing measures had been put in place one week earlier than March 15, when the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention first issued guidance advising against gatherings of 50 people or more. Other expert analysis suggests that between 70% and 99% of US deaths could have been

prevented if those measures had been put in place two weeks earlier.

Instead, Trump spent February downplaying the threat, tweeting that "the Coronavirus is very much under control," that "Cryin' Chuck Schumer is complaining" about insufficient funding to combat Covid, and telling a South Carolina rally crowd on Feb. 28 that the pandemic was the Democrats' "new hoax." In March he would push an untested and unproven drug, hydroxychloroquine, to cure Covid, saying, "What have you got to lose?"

In April, he'd float the idea of injecting disinfectant ("sounds interesting"), and promise once again, "it will go away."

In May he mocked Vice President Joe Biden for wearing a mask.

The sheer stupidity and incompetence is mind-numbing. But when coupled with what we now know, from Trump's own mouth to Bob Woodward's recorder, which is that all of this misdirection and obfuscation was intentional, it's simply too much to bear.

I only wish Woodward had shared this revelation six months ago. It's that bad -- and as a well-respected journalist, he should have known better than to save it for a book.

Bahrain-Israel deal shows why Trump deserves Nobel Peace Prize

I have met with King Hamad of Bahrain and know he is a peacemaker

President Trump deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to establish peaceful relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, which took a big step forward Friday with the announcement that Israel and Bahrain will establish diplomatic ties.

Friday's announcement follows the agreement last month by the United Arab Emirates and Israel to normalize relations. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan are scheduled to join President Trump at the White House Tuesday to sign that agreement.

Officials from Bahrain will attend the Tuesday ceremony, President Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner told reporters Friday.

The only other two Arab nations with diplomatic relations with Israel are Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (in 1994). The Jewish state of Israel has extended a hand of friendship to all of its neighbors since it gained independence from Britain in 1948, but it was attacked in wars and boycotted by Arab nations until Egypt and Jordan established relations.

It is in the self-interest of Israel's other neighbors to end their confrontation with the Jewish state and finally accept that it is here to stay and can provide tremendous opportunities in trade and cooperation in a broad range of issues of regional importance.

And it is in the self-interest of Palestinians to begin negotiations with Israel on the peace plan between them and Israel proposed by President Trump in January. Israel agreed at the time to make the plan the basis for peace talks, but Palestinian leaders rejected the plan immediately and refused to even discuss it.

Thankfully, the UAE, Bahrain — and hopefully more nations in the future — have come to realize that it makes no sense to allow rejectionist Palestinian leadership to hold regional peace hostage to their unreasonable demands and refusal to acknowledge that both sides need to make concessions to achieve peace.

President Trump and Kushner deserve the credit for getting the ball rolling to at long last accelerate the movement toward peace between Israel and its neighbors.

But we know that previous documents like those signed by Egypt and Jordan, along with the Oslo Accords, did not bring true peace. Only people can make peace. To change hearts and replace distrust with hope you need true leaders who trust their own people enough to embrace tolerance and mutual respect and set a course of reconciliation for our children and grandchildren.

King Hamad of Bahrain shakes hands with Rabbi Marvin Hier as Rabbi Abraham Cooper, both of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, stands beside Hier at the king's palace in February 2017. Kudos to peacemakers, King Hamad bin Isa Al

Khalifa of Bahrain, UAE ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu for joining with President Trump to bring regional peace a step closer.

We pray that Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations soon follow suit to establish diplomatic ties with Israel, and that the Palestinians also join in to help build better lives for their own people. Israel continues to extend the hand of friendship to all interested in a just peace.

The Talmud teaches that in the beginning of time, the Almighty was seeking a vessel to deposit all of the blessings He was bestowing on humankind. He concluded that the only receptacle for those blessings was peace. At home and abroad our world is roiling in conflict and confrontation. That receptacle? Broken. We are desperately seeking leaders who repair and expand that vessel. I know from firsthand experience that King Hamad of Bahrain is one such peacemaker. Under his leadership, his tiny island nation is having a global impact and hopefully will help pave the path to wider regional peace.

On a bright Sunday in February 2017 it was my honor to join with my boss at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Rabbi Marvin Hier, to receive an audience with King Hamad.

Over the years, Rabbi Hier and I had met with kings of Jordan, the queen of Spain, presidents, prime ministers and chancellors. But nothing prepared us for what we experienced in our meeting with King Hamad. First, Rabbi Hier broke protocol by firmly grabbing the king's hand and chanting in Hebrew the Jewish blessing for royalty. The king reportedly would later tell his government leaders: "That was the first time anyone came to me not to ask for something but to give me a blessing." During that historic meeting, which was beamed across the Gulf and into Iran, King Hamad — before we could even ask, and in the presence of his entire brain trust — blasted the Arab boycott against Israel. We quickly found out that he and Rabbi Hier had a fondness for Frank Sinatra. And sure enough, King Hamad was about to show us and the world that in pursuit of peace he would do it "my way." When I asked the king what he would think about a Wiesenthal Center invitation for his citizens to visit Israel, he responded in front of his entire Cabinet: "My citizens can travel anywhere." And soon enough, they began visiting Israel.

Then the king went further. He wrote the Bahrain Declaration on Religious Tolerance. In the declaration, an Arab head of state declared for the first time that everyone should be free to pray as he or she sees fit, and even have the freedom not to pray at all. That went beyond tearing down stereotypes. The declaration — first read by the king's son, Sheikh Nasser, before 400 religious leaders in Los Angeles — was a taboo-buster.

(By Rabbi Abraham Cooper,
Courtesy Fox News)

Where Indians and Indians in US diverge

If Indians could vote in the United States (US) presidential elections, they will probably go with the incumbent, if he (or she and they, someday) was on the ballot for a second term, no matter how poorly the candidate was polling at home.

Indians — not to be confused with Indian-Americans — appear to like American presidents once they get to know them, which can be after a visit or an agreement or just personal charm. That should explain, to an extent, President Donald Trump's loud and insistent Indian supporters. I have got to know some of them from their angry mails or messages in response to something disagreeable I wrote about the US president.

President Barack Obama finished his sixth year in office in January 2015 with an average approval rating of 42.6%, according to Gallup, which has tracked US presidents for decades. This was the lowest of the yearly averages of his eight years in office. Six months later in June, as his domestic ratings hovered around 45%, a Pew global poll found 74% of Indians approved of Obama and had confidence he would do the right thing in world affairs. Obama's India visit in January may have played a role but, not entirely.

President George W Bush found his mark with Indians before his own India visit. A 2005 global poll by Pew, such as the one cited above, found 54% Indians approved of Bush and had confidence he would do the right thing in international affairs. By the time he left office in 2008, he had improved his India ratings to 55%, with

an India visit in 2006 and the path-breaking India-US nuclear deal in 2008 in between. At home, only 33% Americans said they had confidence in his conduct of foreign relations in the same Pew poll, and clocked up about the same in domestic ratings at 34% in the Gallup tracker.

President Trump had an indifferent start with Indians. He barely scraped by with the confidence of 14% of Indians as a candidate in 2016, in a Pew poll. By 2019, however, 56% of Indians had grown to have faith in his ability to do the right thing on the global stage.

As the number of those sceptical of him remained stable in the poll, he appeared to have made inroads into 67% of respondents who had either refused to answer or had said they did not know him enough in 2016. His Gallup ratings at home, by contrast, have languished in the 40s.

There are very good individually unique reasons of policies, pacts and personality behind the popularity of incumbents with Indians. But collectively, they appear to represent a pattern: you don't have to try very hard to get the Indians on your side. But Indians in the US, an estimated 1.8 million Indian-Americans who are eligible to vote, are a completely different story. Many of them, who do not share the enthusiasm of their Indian relatives and friends for the US president, often find themselves yelling at their WhatsApp groups on their smartphones, and tapping out angry rejoinders in all-caps, much like the US president, Covfefe and all.



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Bridging the power gap with China

The old framework of ties has broken down. It is time for India to develop a new approach

Foreign secretary Harsh Shringla said on September 4, "We have an unprecedented situation on the India-China border, we have never had this sort of situation since 1962". He demanded a reversion "to the status quo that existed before such aggressive actions took place". However, neither he nor anyone else in government, nor official statements of military-to-military talks nor of diplomatic engagements has given a comprehensive account of either the "situation" or how the status quo has been broken. Details that have appeared in the media have been based on off-the-record briefings or leaks. Official statements have been imprecise. For instance, the ministry of defence statement on the defence minister's recent discussions with his Chinese counterpart in Moscow held China responsible for the current difficulties for attempting to unilaterally alter the status quo. Have these attempts succeeded? If not, what is implied by reversion as demanded by the foreign secretary?

While the precise nature of China's territorial transgressions has not been officially clarified, what is clear is that Beijing's actions have "transgressed the territory of trust", as former external affairs minister Jaswant Singh accused Pakistan of doing in violating the Line of Control (LoC) during the Kargil conflict. And, this transgression by China has been enormous and grave. It follows then that India's China policy, which was put in place in 1988 by Rajiv Gandhi and maintained by all successive governments, is no longer valid for its very premise was trust. That approach rested on a peaceful Line of Actual Control (LAC), finding a solution to the border problem, and uninhibited development of India-China relations in other areas, including trade.

In seeking elements to guide the formulation of a fresh policy, it is essential to admit the great overall power differential between India and China. A comparison, in the regional context, admittedly crude though not simplistic, is the following:



Pakistan is to India what currently India is to China. The crucial word is currently, for while Pakistan's resource potential will remain permanently inferior to that of India, that is not true of India vis-à-vis China. India has a lot to catch up but it has the wherewithal to effectively bridge the gap which has grown over the past four decades. This will require a national consensus, but it can and must be done. As long the Pakistan-India-China power differentials remain as they are now, it would be useful to consider Pakistan's India policy. It is rooted in permanent confrontation and a general avoidance of developing cooperative mechanisms

including in the commercial and economic spheres. Significantly, in 1996, the then Chinese president Jiang Zemin advised Pakistan to pursue the Sino-Indian model of relations - to normalise and advance relations in other spheres while addressing mutual differences.

Jiang Zemin's views were disregarded because the Pakistan army obviously felt that commercial and economic relations would give India leverage to cause disruptions in case of open hostilities and even otherwise. Further, such a web of ties would be a disincentive for India to address the Jammu

and Kashmir issue. Pakistan decided to continue to rely on essentially a three-pronged approach: The development of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, maintaining an effective military balance along LoC, and the instrument of terror. The overall consequence of its India policy has contributed immensely to Pakistan's impoverishment over the past three decades.

It would obviously be necessary to avoid the pitfalls of Pakistan's India policy. Certainly, the use of terror or low-intensity conflict in dealing with a larger neighbour, even if possible, is counterproductive. But there is a need to pay far greater attention to upgrade India's strategic programme to develop manifest deterrence through a triad. The hardening of defences all along LAC to prevent Chinese adventurism has to be undertaken on a priority basis. This will require financial investments but that cannot be avoided despite the current economic troubles.

The other elements of China policy need greater

consideration and dexterity. These relate to economic and commercial ties. Currently, India's dependence on some supply chains emanating from China has strategic implications. This applies to a range of industries such as pharmaceuticals. These have to be reduced to a minimum and domestic production, as envisaged in Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi's Atmanirbhar (self-reliance) programme, has to be fostered on an urgent basis. Other sources have to be developed even at a greater cost but the trade door should not be shut. Greater and open cooperation with major countries equally troubled by Chinese aggressiveness and lack of respect for global rules has to be actively cultivated. India must give up its traditional reluctance rooted in ideology, bearing in mind that it is too large to act as any power's subordinate ally.

Finally, the Sino-Pak nexus has to be addressed through working on the vulnerabilities of Pakistan.

When politics dictates law

The Sushant Singh Rajput case has shown the urgency of police reforms again

On Tuesday, the Sushant Singh Rajput case took a new turn with the arrest of actor Rhea Chakraborty in a drug-related case. This newspaper has been critical of the electronic media's coverage of Rajput's suicide - and the nature of the sensationalist conspiracy theories that have come to dominate a case which should have triggered a discussion on mental health. But it is not just the media which is in the dock; the problem is with India's law enforcement apparatus and police agencies. Irrespective of the merits of the investigation underway, what is increasingly apparent is that all central and state agencies appear to be operating under political directions, for this case is now clearly linked to politics. On one hand are those who believe that Ms Chakraborty is responsible for Rajput's tragic death. This view seems to have the support, if not the



concurrence, of leaders in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - and the social media campaign against her has the sanction of supporters of the party. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that it is central agencies which are at the forefront of implicating Ms Chakraborty in a range of cases. On the other are those who believe that Rajput's death is being used to target the Mumbai film industry and

its leading figures, and there is an attempt to muddy a normal police investigation in the matter. It is not a coincidence that the Maharashtra state administration in general is applying the law against those who it sees as critics.

The issue here is not who is right or wrong. The issue is the complete politicisation of India's premier security agencies, which seem to act not on the basis of

evidence but primarily on political directions. India's governance structure, of course, has a framework where the state police in the case of states, and other investigative agencies in the case of the Centre, operate under executive control. Political oversight is important. At the same time, there is a desperate need for autonomy - for as repeated attempts at police reforms have shown, it is when investigative agencies are free of political pressure that they can work fairly. There cannot be any rule of law if those meant to protect and uphold the law cannot do their jobs independently. The Sushant case is yet again proof that India needs to find ways to insulate its legal machinery from political masters. Otherwise, driven by an irresponsible media and partisan political considerations, individual liberty will be at peril.

Why Iran matters for regional security

As India's energy ambitions revolve around weaning itself off oil and gas usage, there will be less traction to be gained in the energy sphere. But there will be more work to be done in the realm of regional security

India's external affairs and defence ministers recently dropped by Iran and talked to their counterparts, the first such talks since the pandemic began. Afghanistan, rather than oil supplies, tops the agenda, reflecting the new contours of the bilateral relationship. New Delhi and Tehran have reason to worry about the slow-but-steady withdrawal of United States (US) troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban resurgence that will follow. While Iran has its own problems with the US, and won't be unhappy that the US troop presence along its northern

border is winding down, it has reason to be concerned at the prospect of the present Kabul regime weakening. Tehran is known to have engaged with some Taliban leaders, but remains suspicious of its more hardcore factions, which are often intertwined with the Islamic State Khorasan Province and both are deeply anti-Shia.

New Delhi's views converge as these same Taliban factions are also the closest to Rawalpindi. At a time when Iran's economy is stressed by sanctions and low oil prices, and its military stretched by deployments in Iraq and

Syria, an unstable Afghanistan would not be welcome. The two countries need to coordinate their support for the Kabul regime. The partly India-funded freight corridor from Chabahar to Herat is the most tangible symbol of Afghan-related cooperation. The next few years will require such cooperation to expand into other spheres. As India's energy ambitions revolve around weaning itself off oil and gas usage, there will be less traction to be gained in the energy sphere. But there will be more work to be done in the realm of regional security.



Pakistan gets it wrong, again

Its deradicalisation plan for Balochistan is, ironically, based on extremism

For decades, Pakistan has struggled with an insurgency in Balochistan, its largest but least populated province endowed with abundant natural resources. Unlike its other provinces, the local militants in Balochistan have rarely been inspired by radical or extremist Islam, and their demands have had more to do with enhanced autonomy for the region and a greater say in the exploitation of natural resources such as gas and minerals. It is, therefore, curious that the Pakistan army's deradicalisation and rehabilitation programme for ethnic Baloch militants who have

surrendered lays so much emphasis on Islam. Almost a fifth of the programme is devoted to a "religio-patriotism" module, including lectures by speakers such as local leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, which is not known for espousing a progressive or moderate form of Islam. The Jamaat-e-Islami is known for its long-standing links with the Pakistani military and extremist and jihadi groups, which were strengthened during the days of the jihad in Afghanistan against Soviet forces. The deradicalisation plan is also unusual in that it strives to virtually replace the ethnic identity of the surrendered

Baloch militants with one that suits the ends of the Pakistani military. In that regard, the similarity between the Pakistan army's programme in Balochistan and China's so-called re-education camps for Uighurs in the Xinjiang region is startling. Other Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia have sought to use similar deradicalisation programmes to wean militants and terrorists away from hardline and extremist groups, with varying degrees of success. Very few, however, would have had training modules where the former militants would be taught about jihad as part of



the concept of patriotism. Pakistan has for long sought to blame India of fishing in the troubled waters of Balochistan, without any evidence whatsoever. The problems in Balochistan are of Pakistan's own making, ranging from a complete lack of sympathy for the genuine demands of the Baloch people to the rampant exploitation of the

region's natural resources, including for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Addressing the real issues affecting the Baloch people and stopping what human rights activists have described as the "kill and dump" policy of security and intelligence agencies could be much more effective than such a misguided deradicalisation programme.

Biden has an advantage with moderate voters



Given the complex system of electoral college in the United States (US), and the fact that most states are either firmly red or blue, it is a set of swing states which exercise a major say in determining the outcome of the presidential elections. Polls

suggest a tight race in these states. The larger electoral backdrop itself is grim, with the country confronting a pandemic, race riots and an economy in recession. President Donald Trump has given up any pretence to being a unifying national leader. He has positioned himself as a majoritarian law-and-order candidate, seeking to drum up fears in suburban America of minorities. He has added fuel to the fire by portraying his Democratic opponent as a radical leftist. Democratic

candidate Joe Biden has given a starkly different message, arguing he would be a healer and address the long-standing grievances of the US's black minority. The problem for both candidates is that neither is seen as presidential material. Mr Trump's idiosyncrasies have cost him the support of a lot of Republicans. Mr Biden has struggled with his age and explaining why he should be in the White House. But his most important advantage is that Americans have changed when

it comes to race. White Americans today accept their country has a race and policing problem and a policing problem much more than before. Some polls show this figure has tripled in just the past decade. And while support for the present protests has been falling, the sense the status quo is not sustainable has remained strong. If this translates into ballots, Mr Trump's message will struggle to find traction with the middle-of-the-road voters who will decide this election.

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Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



cdc.gov/COVID19

We Must Stop Being Witnesses To Manual Scavenging



Vijayasai Reddy

Though India has made significant progress in human development, there exists a community which makes its living by carrying human excreta and is forced to service the community's sanitation needs because of an identity based on their caste. Manual scavenging is an act of manually cleaning and disposing of human and animal excreta from dry latrines, sewers and streets. Manual scavengers by and large belong to the most disadvantaged of the Dalit sub-castes; they face discrimination even within the Dalit community; it's been an age-old daily routine for this community.

Manual scavenging is not just a caste-based but also a gender-based occupation. Of the 1.2

million manual scavengers in India, about 95% of them are women. Households with dry latrines prefer women over men to clean the excreta in part because they are paid less. Most women are paid only as little as ₹ 20 a month along with a meal everyday for cleaning a dry toilet.

Apart from the social stigma, the work of scavenging is poorly paid and causes life-long health risks and problems which can sometimes turn fatal for those who risk entering manholes without proper protection. Manual scavengers are also prone to skin and respiratory tract infections, tuberculosis, malaria, and dengue among various other illnesses. It is estimated that more than 600 sewer workers die every year.

Their families also suffer because of the stigma associated with sanitation work, its health consequences and the losses suffered by the family in the event of death. The children of manual scavengers pay a heavy price. A lot of children who enroll in schools drop out at a very early age, often because they face discrimination in the school premises at the hands of fellow students and sometimes even staff and teachers. There have been countless instances where children are made to sit in a corner in the classrooms with minimal interaction with teachers and fellow students. Some children are made to clean the school toilets instead of attending classes; this leads to manual scavengers' children having no option except to do what their parents have been doing as they do not have the education for other forms of employment. Even when they do possess the qualification to be employed for a better job, they are not considered fit for the same due to their background. Manual scavenging is a form of forced labor because people enter into this practice without their choice and cannot leave easily if they wish to do so. The main reason for the continuance

of this practice is that the manual scavengers depend upon their employers for a lot of resources. Anyone who tries to leave this has to face a lot of threats from the community. This leaves them with no choice but to return to their work. Some of those who are able to find alternate employment also have to face a lot of harassment.

In 1993, the Government of India enacted the "Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act" which prohibited the employment of manual scavengers for dry latrines and also provided for the construction of dry toilets, that is, toilets that operate without a flush. It provided for imprisonment of up to one year and a fine. This was followed by the "Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013", which acknowledged the urgency of rehabilitating manual scavengers. In 2014, the Supreme Court gave directives to end manual scavenging. "In no country, people are sent to gas chambers to die," remarked the Supreme Court of India in September 2019.

The government has to ensure that this form of modern slavery

is eradicated. Movements like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan have consistently attempted to revolutionize the image of sanitation in the country. The government has brought in technology and policy changes to eliminate such demeaning practices. There is still a long way to go as the complete eradication of the practice of manual scavenging requires innovative technology, better financial support to sanitation workers and fool-proof protective gear. This, coupled with rehabilitation programs, will offer alternative employment options. Education and providing requisite training for alternate employment opportunities will uplift the lives of the children belonging to such families. In some states, successful campaigns have effectively ended the practice, empowering a large number of individuals to live healthier, more dignified lives and find work that is more satisfying. Such campaigns should be launched in each state and nationally to highlight the ongoing practice of manual scavenging and to seek the most effective way to end it. Those involved in manual scavenging should be made aware of their rights and advised on how to leave this profession.

India 2nd Worst-Hit By Covid. Air Pollution Could Be Double Whammy



Chetan Bhattacharji

The number of cases in India has rapidly overtaken Brazil. The weekly average today is tens of thousands of cases more than it was on the first of August. Some expect it to cross 6 million cases by the end of this month. But that's not the only way it's going to get worse. Scientists fear a double whammy once air pollution starts spiraling.

September 7th, the first international day for blue skies day coincidentally saw clean air in Delhi and much of north India, clear enough to see the warning signs. This monsoon has been exceptionally kind to lungs here with the rain and wind removing pollutants. But peak air pollution season is just weeks away.

Research has shown that air pollution could be an important

factor that turns a mild Covid-infection into one that requires acute medical care. In a paper out this month, Professor Michael Brauer of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation summarises the linkages. Short-term increases in air pollution reduces the immune response to respiratory infections. "Emerging research also suggests the air pollution may alter lung cells to increase the number of SARS-CoV-2 virus receptors and increase the likelihood of the virus binding to receptors."

Long-term exposure to air pollution can lead to permanent damage in the lung that weakens a person's defences. The study says that an infection that might have mild symptoms in a healthy

person has a severe impact in those with chronic lung disease. There is also the real possibility of air pollution increasing transmission of the coronavirus: air pollution can lead to an infected person coughing or sneezing. While evidence of a direct link between Covid and air pollution is still limited, there are enough studies to establish that air pollution increases susceptibility to tuberculosis and SARS. Air pollution is also linked to conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and so on, which are now recognised as co-morbidities worsening the outcome in coronavirus patients. Indian officials have so far not put out any advisories on the Covid-air pollution link. Although notably,

the Health Ministry has put out a warning that smokers are more susceptible to Covid-19. Oddly, it says nothing about the internal damage smoking does to a person and any connection that may have to Covid infections; air pollution in places like Delhi is like smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. It's hard to forecast how bad the air pollution will be in the coming months. But anyone tracking this is likely to expect high levels of pollution just as in the past few years. How that will affect the coronavirus infections is not fully known (not to mention how millions who've survived Covid will be affected by rising pollution now). Air pollution is estimated to reduce life-spans by nine years in Delhi and 10 in Lucknow, and across India by a little of 5 years on an average. Now, the pandemic makes controlling air pollution far more pressing.



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Justice for Sushant? Far From - And This Is Why

By Ashutosh

I assumed that after Rhea Chakraborty's arrest, the madness would end. But I was wrong. A new madness has begun. A portion of Kangana Ranaut's office was demolished and a new drama has been birthed.

There is outrage about much injustice being meted out to Kangana, and about fascism resurrecting itself in Mumbai. The people making these allegations are the same who showed no sympathy for a middle-class girl being hounded for the last two months by three central agencies, added and abetted by blood-thirsty TV channels; these people rejoiced in her arrest as a great victory for nationalistic forces. These are people deluded that they are delivering justice for Sushant. These are people who survive on abuses, bitterness and hate. But today, the narrative has suddenly changed. They have turned victims. They are now demanding democracy and justice. The story of the last few months has been of the news business setting loose bloodhounds ready to kill in the mad race for TRPs. This story

will go down in history as a story of great shame and a dark chapter of motivated, valueless journalism. This saga began after Sushant Singh Rajput's death. Initially, it was the tragic story of a promising life cut short. Suddenly, politicians from Bihar, hiding behind Sushant's family and firing from its shoulder, started weaving conspiracy theories about Sushant having been murdered. All of a sudden, Sushant's family, who earlier seemed satisfied with the Mumbai Police, lodged an FIR in Bihar. Two charges were pressed in the FIR. One, it was insinuated that Rhea and her family may be responsible for Sushant's death. Two, Rhea and her family had siphoned off money from Sushant's bank account. The transacted amount was said to be of 15 crores. Rhea was depicted as a 'vishkanya' who had performed black magic on Sushant. She was the villain, he was the naive hero who fell for her and paid with his life. Three central agencies and the Bihar Police set out to investigate the matter like James Bond with supersonic speed as if the fate of the country hinged upon this case. Let's not forget the vigilante journalists who vowed to correct all the wrongs

done to Sushant and his family and to get them justice in typical Shahenshah fashion.

The coverage by some of these journalists has been an exercise in malice. It was apparent that there was some score to be settled with the Maharashtra Government and the Mumbai Police. And this settling of scores was done in the name of "justice for Sushant". Viewers were fed wrong information and fake news.

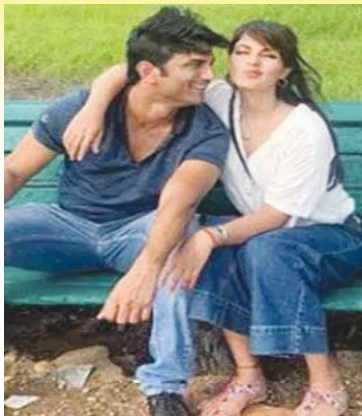
Finally, Rhea and her brother were arrested in connection with on charges of procuring drugs and supplying them to Sushant. It is important to remember that no drug was confiscated from either of them. The case was triggered by WhatsApp chats and then Rhea reportedly told investigators that she had bought drugs for Sushant, allegedly describing him as a "drug addict" for whom she "did everything". The remand copy filed by the Narcotics Control Bureau in court says "During statement present respondent Rhea Chakraborty revealed about her involvement in procurement of drug and financial transaction and also her instructions to Samuel Miranda,



Dipesh Sawant and Showik Chakraborty in this regard. Therefore it is clear from the statement that respondent is an active member of drug syndicate connected with drug supplies. It is also clear from their statement that the present respondent used to procure drugs for Sushant Singh Rajput for consumption purpose." The last line is significant. According to the NCB, Sushant Singh Rajput was consuming drugs and the drugs were procured by Rhea and persons who were working for him at his residence. This busts the myth proposed by Sushant's family and TV channels that Sushant was being manipulated and wronged, a small-town boy brought up with good family values. Another

sentence in the remand copy: "The present respondent used to manage finance for drug procurement along with Sushant Singh Rajput." So then he too was part of a "drug syndicate". It is clear from the remand copy that Rhea is accused of buying drugs for Sushant, not of selling them or using them herself as announced by some TV channels. Now the issue is when a chargesheet is filed by the NCB, will it name him as the main man in this drug syndicate? Is this what Sushant's family wanted? Is this justice for Sushant? In a television interview, Rhea pointed out that Sushant is now being remembered for his demons and not for his promising career or his talent. Maybe think about that.

So, Rhea's Arrested. Take A Good Look At Yourself.



By Vir Sanghvi

By now, we have blamed everyone. Our favourite target has been the TV channels, revelling in their sensationalistic, exaggerated and often totally fabricated coverage of the Sushant Singh Rajput murder case. We have been appalled by the anchors and have been shocked by the way in which TV crews have surrounded and jostled Rhea Chakraborty.

We have blamed the politicians and their agencies as well. We have bemoaned the fact that there is a clear political angle to the way in which the case has been handled. Obviously, our rulers want to play politics to inflame sentiments before the Bihar election. And there is a second agenda: to do as much damage as possible to the Shiv Sena, the former ally who spurned

the BJP. The agencies have done what their masters wanted. Is it normal to launch an Enforcement Directorate investigation into an unsubstantiated allegation that ? 15 crore may have been transferred from one account to another? (All the evidence now suggests that there was never a payment of Rs 15 crore into Sushant's account anyway.) Does the Narcotics Control Bureau need to launch such a huge inquiry and make arrests in a case that involved (apparently, even this is being disputed) the purchase of 59 grams of marijuana?

All of our indignation is justified. Nobody can deny that. But here's my problem: we tend to blame everybody else except for the principal culprits. Ourselves.

The truth is that the public is enjoying the spectacle and it wants more. One look at the television ratings will tell you how this case is playing it out. Even while anchors on other channels huff and puff about Republic TV, not only has the channel solidified its position as the most-watched English channel, its Hindi counterpart has swept past the established market leader to also become Number One. Who is watching these channels? It is not some faceless 'them' that we can all blame. It is us. People like you and me. you checked out Twitter recently? Say something vaguely

sympathetic about Rhea Chakraborty and the responses will come flooding in. Some will be from bots and paid tweeters. (One of the mysteries of this saga is: who has established the fake accounts used only to tweet about this case? Who is paying so many of the tweeters? Who is picking up the tab for the glove puppets? But a surprisingly large proportion will be ordinary citizens with genuine accounts. Many (but by no means all or perhaps even most) will say, on their bios, that they support the BJP and the Prime Minister. But let's not forget that they are working men and women with jobs, children, homes, families, etc.

And they spout the most vicious hatred of Rhea. They are convinced that Sushant was murdered (Rhea's family will be painted as honey-trapping, drug-peddling, money-grabbing crooks). The suggestion, now substantiated with much evidence, that Sushant had mental health issues is dismissed as being part of a murderous conspiracy against him. For all the talk of patriarchy and feminism, women are also enthusiastic supporters of our version of the 'Lock Her Up' movement. They smear Rhea's morals and demand that she be punished.

And if you go out of the charmed circle of the chattering classes, you will find that far from being shocked by what is happening, many educated (well, literate, at any rate) people feel that a grave injustice was done to Sushant and that the guilty people are now being punished. What does this tell us about today's India - or at least, the India that watches TV and goes on social media?

It tells us that large sections of the middle class have bought a conspiracy theory of how things function. They believe that India was run by an elite which had money, spoke English, and made the key decisions. They see this elite as being good-looking, sophisticated and worthy of envy. Bollywood fits neatly into this category. So do the other traditional targets of the new, aspirational middle class: the so-called Lutyens lobby, political dynasts like the Thackerays, and so on. If this sounds bonkers to you, remember that there are many people who are deeply invested in this world-view. And if you disagree with it, they wonder if you are part of the conspiracy too. And secondly, the jubilation over Rhea's arrest tells us how much we have regressed back in time and

become a primitive society where the mob rules, even if this time around, it participates by way of smart phone. It is like Romans watching prisoners being torn apart by lions, or like some modern version of bear-bating: a lynching beamed live to our homes and our phones by satellite and by 4G.

The conspiracy theory view of India does not worry me that much. It is not unusual for a new middle class to resent the old and to feel that even though it is just as deserving, it is still not being given a seat at the table. That view changes with demographics. The children of today's angry, first-generation middle class TV viewers will overcome their resentments and feel more at home than their parents did.

What worries me the rise of the mob, the naked bloodlust, the desire for unspecified revenge and the willingness to target the defenseless or the outnumbered. It is the sort of madness that occurs during a riot when a large, well-armed mob burns down the homes of vulnerable people and then congratulates itself on its accomplishment.

That surely, is the India we are becoming. A country when the mob roams hungrily, looking to create a modern-day riot.



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Kabul bomb targets VP, kills 10 civilians

(News Agencies)- A bombing in the Afghan capital on Wednesday targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president, who suffered minor injuries in the attack that killed 10 people and wounded at least 31, including several of the vice president's bodyguards, the Interior Ministry said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing and the Taliban quickly denied they were behind the attack. First Vice President Amrullah Saleh suffered minor burns in the blast. The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as his convoy passed by.

Saleh, who is also Afghanistan's former intelligence chief, said in his first television appearance immediately after the attack that he was fine and had sustained only slight burns. He appeared in the TV footage with bandages on one hand.

"Me and my younger son who was also with me are fine," Saleh said. "I have slight burns on my face and hand from the wave of the blast. I don't have exact details right now, but I apologize

to those who suffered casualties and those who lost their property in the attack."

His spokesman, Razwan Murad, called the attack a "vicious terrorist attempt" on Saleh's life. The roads in the vicinity of the bombing were closed off.

The Interior Ministry says the bomb went off as Saleh's convoy was passing through a section of Kabul with shops that sell gas cylinders for use in heating homes and cooking. The blast ignited a fire that set ablaze a number of the shops.

The explosion left behind a scene of destruction - at least 10 shops were smoldering in the aftermath of the explosion that had also shattered windows of dozens of nearby homes, some with doors hanging off their hinges. Cars were wrecked and debris was scattered around.

Earlier, the Interior Ministry's spokesman, Tariq Arian, first confirmed to The Associated Press that the bombing targeted Saleh's convoy. Akmal Samsor, spokesman for the Afghan public health ministry, said the 31 wounded were taken to different hospitals for treatment.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed was quick to deny the insurgents were involved in any way, saying that "today's explosion in Kabul has nothing to do with the Mujahedeen of the Islamic Emirate," as the Taliban call themselves.

Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, head of Afghanistan's negotiating team with the Taliban, condemned the attack in a tweet and urged an end to the killings. "Our people are desperately looking for peace," he said. "It is

crucial to put an urgent end to the violence. The time for excuses is over. The killings must end," The U.N. chief's special representative for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, said she was "relieved to hear" that Saleh survived the attack.

Lyons added that she was shocked by the high number of civilian casualties, mainly bystanders. "Perpetrators must face justice," she added. Both the insurgents and the Islamic State group are active in Kabul where tensions are also high ahead of the expected start of negotiations between an official Afghan delegation and the



Taliban. Washington has been ramping up pressure on both sides to get the talks underway. America's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is in Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, trying to get the negotiations started.

The negotiations, known as intra-Afghan talks, were envisaged as part of a peace deal the U.S. signed with the Taliban in Qatar in February to end America's longest war. At the time, the talks were cast as Afghanistan's best chance at peace after decades of conflict. Kabul's peace negotiation team is waiting in the Afghan capital to

travel to the Qatari capital of Doha for the talks but delays have been relentless. In recent days, Washington, officials in Kabul and the Taliban have all indicated that they could get under way imminently.

The U.S.-Taliban deal allows for the exit of American soldiers from Afghanistan. However, U.S troop pullout, which has already begun, does not hinge on the success of intra-Afghan talks but rather on commitments from the Taliban to fight against other militant groups - such as the Islamic State group - and to prevent Afghanistan from being a staging arena for attacks against the U.S. and its allies.

12 suspects arrested in Lahore motorway gang rape: Punjab govt



(News Agencies)- Punjab government spokesperson Mussarat Cheema on Thursday said police had arrested 12 men suspected of involvement in the alleged gang-rape of a woman on the Lahore-Sialkot motorway.

Two "robbers" allegedly raped the woman at gunpoint in Gujarpura area on Wednesday while she was waiting for help on the motorway after her car developed a fault. A police official said as the woman crossed the toll plaza on the Lahore-Sialkot motorway, her car stalled either due to shortage of petrol or some fault. Meanwhile, she got a call

from a relative in Gujranwala, who asked her to call the police helpline for help while he also left from home to reach her. When he reached the location, he found the woman terrified with her clothes stained with blood. The police official said two armed men found the woman alone, took her and her children to a nearby field at gunpoint and gang-raped her, adding that police had formed teams to trace the culprits. Cheema said in a tweet today that Punjab Police and related departments were "working in close coordination to capture those involved in [the] painful motorway incident". "So

far 12 suspects have been arrested and search is going on," she said. A statement released by the Punjab Police also confirmed the arrests and said that 20 teams of Lahore Police and CIA, headed by the deputy inspector general of police (investigation), had been constituted on the orders of Inspector General Inam Ghani to investigate the case. It said that police were taking all necessary measures, adding that "no stone will be left unturned to provide immediate justice to the victim and her family". The police teams are "working day and night", the statement said, to identify the accused by gathering DNA evidence, geofencing, examining CCTV footage and Nadra records. "More than half of the suspects in the case are being investigated and raids are being carried out to nab dozens of former record holders in such incidents," IGP Ghani was quoted as saying. During a meeting, Ghani said that command officers should consider it as a test case and

bring it to a logical conclusion as early as possible, the statement said. "Irresponsibility would not be tolerated in arresting the social criminals involved in sexual violence and oppression," he said. Prime Minister Imran Khan, in a statement, condemned the sexual assault of the lady in Lahore as well as that of a five-year-old child, who had been murdered and torched after being raped in Karachi, which surfaced on Sunday. He summoned reports of both incidents from the IGs of the provinces. "The protection of women is the government's foremost priority and responsibility. Such brutality and savagery cannot be allowed in any civilised society. Such incidents are against our social values and an ugly stain on our society," the statement released by PM Office said. The prime minister also stressed on the need to strengthen laws for the protection of women and children. Meanwhile, Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari said that the ministry's regional office "immediately asked for an

action report from the police". The ministry received the report as well as a copy of the first information report (FIR) of the incident, she added. Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar vowed that justice would be delivered in the case. "Justice will be done in the motorway case no matter what and those who tortured the victim will have to suffer strict punishment!" he tweeted.

He said that the responsibility of providing protection and justice to civilians rested with the state. "Our manifesto is to create a society where, whether it's day or night, women/children would feel safe whether they are alone or with family." Information Minister Shibli Faraz also condemned the incident and vowed that the "wicked characters who committed this heinous act will not escape the law" and will be punished accordingly. PML-N President and Leader of the Opposition Shehbaz Sharif urged society to "at least stand with the victim and acknowledge the real problem".

Missing Pak official who 'helped' in report on PM's aide reappears

Sajid Gondal, a joint director at Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, returned home on Tuesday evening, five days after he went missing.

(News Agencies)- A Pakistani government official, who is suspected to have helped journalists in writing a story about the rise to riches of a top general and key aide to Prime Minister Imran Khan, has returned home after unknown abductors freed him on the outskirts of Islamabad, officials and the man said. Sajid Gondal, a joint director at Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, returned home on Tuesday evening, five days after he went missing. According to his colleagues, Gondal, a former reporter with Dawn newspaper, was investigating Lt Gen (retd) Saleem Bajwa, the chairman of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Authority and information aide to Prime Minister Khan. Bajwa resigned last week as special assistant to the prime minister on information and broadcasting, but Khan rejected the resignation. Bajwa's move came after a report alleged that he had used his offices to help his family set up several offshore businesses. Bajwa, who also served as Commander of the Southern Command, rejected the allegations, and said he would continue to head CPEC Authority. It was unclear who held Gondal for five days, though his family and friends speculated he was in the custody of one of Pakistan's intelligence agencies, which work largely outside the control of the government. "I am back and safe, and I am thankful to all friends who were worried for me," tweeted Gondal, who had gone missing while visiting a family-owned farm. His car was found abandoned on a road on the outskirts of Islamabad. Gondal was freed after his relatives rallied in Islamabad



amid growing pressure on social media for his release. On Saturday, the Islamabad High Court had ordered authorities to trace Gondal by Monday, while hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by his mother Asmat Bibi. The court also forwarded a copy of the order to the cabinet division secretary. "The abduction of a citizen from the federal capital is extremely alarming," Chief Justice Athar Minallah remarked. Federal information and broadcasting minister Shibli Faraz said Prime Minister Imran Khan was concerned about Gondal's abduction in Islamabad.

Bangladesh to get its first blockchain remittance service

(News Agencies)- The South Asian nation of Bangladesh will soon get its first blockchain remittance system that will allow Bangladeshi expats in Malaysia to instantly transfer wage remittances to their home country.

According to a report from The Business Standard, the British national banking service firm Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) today announced the blockchain-based cross-border remittance service for Bangladesh.

SCB developed the remittance service in collaboration with the Bangladesh-based mobile banking platform bKash and the Malaysian remittance provider Valyou. It utilizes the blockchain technology of Ant Group, the financial arm of the Chinese business conglomerate Alibaba Group. Ant Group, formerly known as Ant Financial, appointed SCB as its core partner bank in 2018 to work on new blockchain remittance systems. While the remittance service for

Bangladesh is still in the final stage of its commercial testing, the bank plans to launch it soon for Valyou and bKash customers. Following the launch, Bangladeshi wage earners in Malaysia will be able to transfer funds via Valyou to bKash wallet holders in Bangladesh.



Standard Chartered Bank will act as the fund settlement bank and regulatory approval holder for the remittance service. Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, said that remittances were an important driver for the Bangladesh economy and

supported millions of families. The launch of an instant remittance system available 24/7, he said, would make the transfer process more convenient for remitters. As Cointelegraph reported in August, SCB also settled the first blockchain transaction in Bangladesh by issuing a letter of credit for a trade between apparel manufacturer and exporter Viyellatex Ltd. and Viyellatex Spinning.

India condemns bomb attack on Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh



(News Agencies)- India on Wednesday strongly condemned the deadly bomb attack targeting Afghanistan's first Vice President Amrullah Saleh in Kabul. The Afghan vice president was "slightly injured" in the bomb attack on his convoy this morning that killed 10 people and injured more than a dozen, according to Afghan media reports. "India strongly condemns cowardly

terrorist attack on Afg VP @AmrullahSaleh2. Our condolences to martyrs & prayers with injured," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said on Twitter.

He said India stands with Afghanistan in the fight to eradicate "terror infrastructure and sponsors" for enduring peace in that country.

Asim Bajwa's dirty money is RAW saazish in Imran Khan's Pakistan

Pakistan's default option for any crisis is to blame India. As a country that relies on conspiracy theories to snuggle out of difficult situations, it was on expected lines that a great Indian saazish was discovered when allegations against Lt Gen (retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa surfaced that his family empire had grown in sync with his rise in the Pakistani military. But how does Pakistan do it? It's simple: brush every logical critique with the paint of ghaddari - perfidy - and add a bit of India and R&AW into it. Bajwa toh bahana hai, asal nishana CPEC hai. Although, the

paranoia that the world is conspiring against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is not new and continues to rear its head because it works like magic. One time, a man in Chitral was booked under blasphemy law for declaring himself a messiah. An official said that it was perhaps some sort of a conspiracy to "sabotage CPEC". Terrorism that set its roots some 14 years before CPEC's arrival also became part of the larger "conspiracy" to demolish CPEC. In former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's case, we learnt that in

Pakistan, you are guilty until proven innocent. Before coming to power, Imran Khan used to ask Sharif to produce receipts for the investments in London. He'd ask him and his family to give talashi (body search) for their 'stolen wealth'. All that Pakistan's mainstream media did then was ask for money trails, evidence, property transfers and whatnot. But all that has withered away. Rules have changed now that Imran Khan is in power.

The story behind it On 27 August, Fact Focus published an extraordinary

account of the businesses of Bajwa family in four countries, which included pizza franchises, companies, real estate and commercial properties. Despite the story being backed by hundreds of documents, Bajwa, the chairman of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on information, found it easy to call it "malicious propaganda". The floodgates of conspiracy opened and in came the readymade Indian saazish (conspiracy) to malign Pakistan: 'How a retired Indian army officer

(Major Gaurav Arya) trapped a Pakistani journalist (Ahmad Noorani) into a web of lies'. 'How' remains the operative part here. But 'patriotic' canines in the controlled media had no interest in asking how - their job was to shoot the messenger. The floodgates of conspiracy opened and in came the readymade Indian saazish (conspiracy) to malign Pakistan: 'How a retired Indian army officer (Major Gaurav Arya) trapped a Pakistani journalist (Ahmad Noorani) into a web of lies'. 'How' remains the operative part here.

Prominent women attacked as Afghanistan eyes peace

Just minutes after Saba Sahar had left her home in Kabul, her husband heard gunshots ring out. The actress, film director and senior police official had received warnings of threats to her life in the past, so Emal Zaki frantically called his wife.

"She answered the phone and told me to come as soon as possible. She said she had been shot," Mr Zaki told the BBC.

He was the first person on the scene and found his wife crouched down by a wall where she and her bodyguards had been trying to fend off the attackers. She had been shot multiple times but was still alive. He bundled her into a car and rushed to hospital.

Ms Sahar is one of Afghanistan's first female film directors. Fiction and real life have interwoven for her at times, as she has starred in and helped produce a TV series about the Afghan police, and also holds a high-level role with the police force and Ministry of Interior.

She is now recovering in hospital, and is gradually starting to walk again. Her husband believes she was targeted for her work promoting women's rights.

"Those who raise women's voices are always at risk of being targeted," Mr Zaki told the BBC, before adding defiantly, "but I think these attacks will never succeed in silencing the voices of the women of Afghanistan."

"The Afghan women determined not to lose out

"The girl who picked up an AK-47 to defend her family

"They tried to kill my mother in front of me, twice'

Under Taliban rule in the 1990s women were not allowed to attend school or work. Since the hard-line group were overthrown in 2001, fragile progress has been made in bringing more Afghan women back into public life, though challenges remain. The Taliban now say they don't oppose women's education, or them working. But some remain sceptical.

The attack on Saba Sahar is one of a number of assassination attempts that have taken place in Kabul in recent months, often targeting prominent figures.

In many instances, including the shooting of Ms Sahar, the Taliban has denied being responsible, but no other militant group has admitted involvement either.



The spate of attacks - targeted shootings or blasts caused by small magnetic bombs attached to moving cars - come as other forms of militant violence in the Afghan capital have decreased. Since the Taliban signed an agreement with the United States in February, there have been far fewer large-scale suicide bombings, though violence in more rural areas has continued. With talks between the Taliban and Afghan officials due to begin in the coming days in Doha, there are fears the attacks are attempts to marginalise vocal figures and intimidate civil society.

"What to expect from

new Taliban peace talks

"The Afghan war: The short and long story

"Who are the Taliban?

Victims include a senior Ministry of Education official who had participated in informal discussions with the Taliban in the past, while on Wednesday, First Vice-President Amrullah Saleh, who has been a staunch opponent of the militants, survived a roadside bomb blast that targeted his convoy.

Women have also been repeatedly targeted. The killing of Fatima Khalil, a bright young employee of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, in June caused particular outrage and despair. Last month, politician Fawzia Koofi, who is part of the negotiating team due to meet with the Taliban, was shot whilst returning to Kabul from a neighbouring province. She survived, with injuries to her arm.

She told the BBC the shooting would not deter her from her work or from attending the talks when they begin.

"In fact, it has given me more strength," she said. "I could see that the whole public stood by me. Even those who have views that are different from my views condemned this attack."

Ms Koofi, who has been a vocal proponent of women's rights, believes she may have been targeted both because of her political stance, and in an effort "to spoil the peace talks".

So far, no-one seems clear exactly who is behind the attacks. Could the Taliban be responsible, and deliberately not claiming them publicly? Or could other militants such the Islamic State group, or even regional intelligence agencies be trying to play a disruptive role?

The targeting of prominent female figures is also, however, feeding into wider concerns about what the outcome of the peace process will mean for Afghan women, and whether there could be a rolling back of the progress made in the last two decades.

Ms Koofi says she worries in the coming weeks and months that more women will be targeted.

"We will, unfortunately, have to pay a bigger price before peace."

WHO lists Pakistan among 7 countries world can learn from to fight future pandemics

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has listed Pakistan among seven countries that it says the world can learn from to fight future pandemics.

Pakistan has successfully flattened the coronavirus curve despite its dilapidated health infrastructure while the deadly contagion is spreading uncontrollably in many developed countries of the world. Covid-19, the respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus, has sickened 27.5 million people on the entire planet earth - except for Antarctica - and killed over 900,000 people since its outbreak in December, last year. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, while speaking at the media briefing, highlighted seven countries, amongst many, whose preparation and response offer lessons for the rest of the world in how to deal with a global

pandemic. These countries include Pakistan, Italy, Thailand, Mongolia, Mauritius and Uruguay.

"Pakistan has used the infrastructure it developed in its fight against polio to tackle Covid-19," said the director general. "Community health workers, previously used to vaccinate children for polio, have been redeployed for contact tracing and monitoring."

Similarly, Thailand has benefited from 40 years of health system strengthening, Dr Tedros explained. "A well-resourced medical and public health system is supported by strong leadership. Coupled with 1 million village health volunteers, and strong communication, the nation has built trust and compliance and confidence among the general population," he said.

Italy was one of the first countries to experience a large outbreak outside of China, said Dr Tedros.

It "took hard decisions based on the evidence and persisted with them". Unity and solidarity, along with the dedication of health workers, helped bring the outbreak under control, he explained.

Mongolia also reacted quickly. It activated its State Emergency Committee in January and didn't report a case until January, and still has no reported deaths.

Mauritius used previous experience with contact-tracing and a swift response to overcome high-risk issues - high population density, high rate of non-communicable diseases and lots of international travellers.

Uruguay has one of Latin America's most 'robust and resilient' health systems in Latin America, explained Dr Tedros. Sustainable investments in public health were built on political consensus, he added.

There are many other countries that have done well, added Dr Tedros. From Japan to New



Zealand and Vietnam, many countries have fared better because of lessons learned during previous outbreaks of disease, such as SARS or Ebola. Having learned the lessons of previous pandemics, it's therefore, "vital that we learn the lessons this pandemic is teaching us," he added.

Dr Tedros also issued a stark warning about the work needed to prepare the world for future

pandemics. "This will not be the last pandemic," he told the media briefing.

"History teaches us that outbreaks and pandemics are a fact of life. But when the next pandemic comes, the world must be ready - more ready than it was this time."

Dr Tedros called on countries to invest in public health, as a "foundation of social, economic and political stability".



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Trump knew exactly how serious Covid-19 is, but downplayed it: Book

"It's more deadly than even your strenuous flu," Trump had told legendary journalist Bob Woodward in an on-record interview.

President Donald Trump knew way back in January exactly how serious the threat Covid-19 posed to the US was, but always wanted to "play it down", according to a forthcoming book by legendary investigative journalist Bob Woodward.

"This will be the biggest national security threat you face in your presidency," national security adviser Robert O'Brien told Trump during an Oval Office meeting on January 28, Woodward writes in the book, *Rage*, according to The Washington Post, where Woodward works as an associate editor. "This is going

to be the roughest thing you face," O'Brien had added.

Ten days later, Trump called Woodward and said in an on-record interview: "You just breathe the air and that's how it's passed."

"And so that's a very tricky one. That's a very delicate one. It's also more deadly than even your strenuous flu," he said in the interview, which was released on Wednesday and aired by news channels. "This is deadly stuff." But the president conveyed an altogether different message to the American public then, as he does now. He had said that the threat to the US from the

coronavirus was ephemeral and will somehow be over magically.

"I wanted to always play it down," the president told Woodward in another interview on March 19.

Trump is battling continuing criticism of his handling of the pandemic, with allegations that he deliberately downplayed it and ignored advice of his health experts so as to not negatively impact his re-election chances. His administration's response has polled poorly with Americans as well.

But the president has fought back, claiming he did well by shutting down the country from



travellers from China early, ramping up production of ventilators and protective gear for health care personnel.

Woodward's book is based on several on-record interviews with the president, and will join a growing collection of accounts

scrutinising Trump's character and performance in office in the weeks near the November 3 elections.

It covers the president's response to the anti-racism unrest, meetings with North Korea's Kim Jong Un and many other issues.

A grand jury will soon hear case of Breonna Taylor's killing

A grand jury has been empaneled to investigate the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, two people close to the process told CNN.



about a timeline regarding the investigation into the death of Ms. Breonna Taylor. An investigation, if done properly, cannot follow a specific timeline," Cameron tweeted.

"When the investigation concludes and a decision is made, we will provide an update about an announcement," Cameron wrote. "The news will come from our office and not unnamed sources. Until that time, the investigation remains ongoing."

A representative for Taylor's family said the attorney general had previewed the grand jury process during a meeting with

the family last month.

"On August 12, at the meeting with Tamika Palmer's family and her lawyers with Cameron's office, Cameron told the family that once the FBI ballistic come back and they do re-interviews with witnesses that his office will put the case in front of Jefferson County grand jury," said Christopher 2X, a community activist who is assisting Taylor's mother Tamika Palmer.

Lonita Baker, an attorney representing the Taylor family in a wrongful-death lawsuit, said she has not been contacted by the attorney

general's office regarding the grand jury process. Taylor was killed in the barrage of shots from the three officers, Sgt. Jonathan Mattingly and officers Brett Hankison and Myles Cosgrove. Mattingly's attorney, Todd McMurtry, has previously defended his client's conduct. "Sgt. Mattingly was following orders of superior officers, was not involved in the planning process of the arrest, and at all times followed established police procedures," McMurtry said. CNN has reached out to the attorneys for Cosgrove and Hankison for comment.

The grand jury, which was empaneled this week, "will be hearing other criminal cases first to get their feet wet with the process and then hear the Taylor case," a source close to the investigation told CNN on Wednesday.

Taylor, a 26-year-old EMT and aspiring nurse, was fatally shot after police broke down the door to her apartment while executing a late-night "no-knock" warrant in a narcotics investigation on March 13.

None of the police officers involved in the flawed raid have been charged with a crime. One officer involved was fired in late June, more than three months after the shooting.

The source told CNN that the grand jury is meeting at an alternate location because of safety concerns due to ongoing protests in Jefferson Square Park, which has been informally renamed as "Breonna Taylor Park."

The grand jury is expected to eventually decide the fate of three officers who opened fire during the incident.

Kentucky Attorney General

Daniel Cameron, who is leading the investigation into Taylor's death, tweeted Wednesday that "conflicting rumors and reports" circulating on a daily basis about the investigation don't do anything to "advance justice."

"My office is continually asked

US reveals it has revoked more than 1,000 visas to Chinese nationals deemed security risks

More than 1,000 Chinese nationals have had their visas revoked by the United States since June, under a program aimed at graduate students and researchers believed to have ties to the Chinese military.

The US State Department said in a statement Wednesday that "high-risk graduate students and research scholars" had been expelled, after they "were found to be subject to Presidential Proclamation 10043 and therefore ineligible for a visa." Issued by President Donald Trump at the end of May, and implemented beginning June 1, the proclamation claims that China "is engaged in a wide-ranging and heavily resourced campaign to acquire sensitive United States technologies and intellectual property, in part to bolster the

modernization and capability of its military, the People's Liberation Army."

The State Department said the revocation of visas "safeguards US national security by limiting the PRC's ability to leverage Chinese graduate students and researchers in the United States to steal United States technologies, intellectual property, and information to develop advanced military capabilities."

Speaking Wednesday, acting US Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf said that "China has leveraged every aspect of its country including its economy, its military, and its diplomatic power, demonstrating a rejection of western liberal democracy and continually renewing its commitment to remake the world order in its own authoritarian image." "We continue to

welcome legitimate students and scholars from China who do not further the Chinese Communist Party's goals of military dominance," it added.

There are some 369,000 Chinese nationals estimated to be studying in the US, though many have had their studies disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. For a decade now, China has been the "largest source of international students," according to the Institute of International Education.

Beijing has yet to react to the most recent announcement, but in June, China's education ministry said it "resolutely opposes" any US government move to restrict Chinese students and "strongly condemns any calculated politicization and stigmatization of normal academic exchanges."

Michael Cohen says Trump is not joking about staying in office for more than 2 terms

President Donald Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen said Wednesday evening that Trump isn't joking when he floats the notion of attempting to stay in the White House beyond two terms.

"Donald Trump believes that he should be the ruler -- the dictator of the United States of America. He actually is looking to change the Constitution. When Donald Trump jokes about 12 more years ... he is not joking. Donald Trump does not have a sense of humor," Cohen told CNN's Don Lemon on "CNN Tonight." "So I want you to understand that when he says 12 more years, if he wins he is going to automatically day number one start thinking how he can change the Constitution for a third term, and then a fourth term, like what he said to President XI and like what he said to so many other people. It's why he admires the Kim Jong Uns of the world." Even during an uphill reelection campaign, the President has repeatedly advanced the idea of a third term while also looking to sow doubt in the integrity of November's election. "We are going to win four more years," Trump

said at a rally in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, last month. "And then after that, we'll go for another four years because they spied on my campaign. We should get a redo of four years." Expanding on his warning against reelecting Trump on Wednesday, Cohen went on to describe the White House as "like a cult" with a culture that forbids anyone from challenging the President. "Not only is the Trump Organization like a cult, but so is the White House," he said.

"Anybody that wants to work there, God forbid you say something wrong. God forbid you do something wrong. You're fired. That's exactly why there have been so many people coming in and out of the administration. I think he set all sorts of records. He likes records. Well, he certainly set the record for the most people in and out of the administration." Pressed on how Trump has been able to

command loyalty within the Republican Party, Cohen offered: "Because he is a cult leader."

"And people somehow follow him. Why? I don't know why. I did it when I had my daughter, my wife, my son continuously telling me, 'Stop, we don't want you to work for him. Quit, you don't need to work for him. What are you doing? The things that you are doing are morally wrong. You lost your moral compass, wake up.'" His comments come one day after the release of his book where he unleashes on the President as "a cheat, a liar, a fraud, a bully, a racist, a predator, a con man."

Cohen had been a vocal surrogate for Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign before he pleaded guilty in 2018 to tax fraud, lying to Congress and campaign finance violations for facilitating hush money payments to two

women who alleged past affairs with the President. Trump has denied having affairs with the women.

When pleading guilty, he implicated the President, telling a federal judge that he had made the payments "in coordination with and at the direction of" Trump, who prosecutors identified in court filings as "Individual 1."

"If you look at the end of the book it's really a call. It's a warning call to anybody who is reading the book. Put the Visine in your eyes, clean your eyes out and see that Donald Trump cares for no one or anything other than himself. So he doesn't care if your family member dies as long as it's not him. He doesn't care about anything other than himself and this election," Cohen said Wednesday.

"And he is willing to sacrifice your life so he has four more years."

At least 15 people have been killed in California, Oregon and Washington wildfires



California, is now considered the biggest in the state's recorded history, according to Cal Fire. It has consumed 471,185 acres and has only been 24% contained since it was sparked by storm lightning on August 17.

While the full extent of the damage remains unclear in many communities, the wildfires have taken a toll on human lives. A child in Washington state was killed in the Cold Springs Fire, officials said Wednesday. Two of

the child's relatives were airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, where they're both in critical condition and being treated by burn specialists, according to a hospital spokeswoman. Live updates on the wildfires

Authorities found seven bodies in Northern California on Thursday as firefighters battled multiple ravaging wildfires, raising the total number of victims in the state to 10.

At least five others have been killed in Washington state and Oregon this week amid a series of out of control wildfires. The deadly, fast-moving wildfires ravaging across multiple West Coast states on Thursday have forced about 500,000 people in Oregon to flee their homes, state officials said.

The Oregon Office of Emergency Management estimates that about half a million people -- more than 10% of the state's population, according to the Census Bureau -- have been evacuated

and "that number continues to grow." The wildfires have left at least eight people dead in California, Washington state and Oregon this week, and were raging out of control Thursday despite firefighters' efforts.

Thick smoke has blanketed the region, and some communities in southern Oregon have already been reduced to ashes.

Firefighters from around the United States were called to help contain the massive blazes. As of Thursday, more than 100 wildfires across 12 Western states burned more than 4.3 million acres, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. That's nearly 7,000 square miles, or roughly the size of New Jersey. One of the blazes, the August Complex fire in Northern

US official claims pressure to downplay intelligence reports

An intelligence analyst at the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has said he was put under pressure to downplay the threat of Russian interference in the 3 November election as it "made the president look bad".

In a whistleblower complaint, Brian Murphy said he had been demoted for refusing to alter reports on this and other issues such as white supremacy. The directives were illegal, he said. The White House and DHS have both denied the allegations. US intelligence agencies concluded that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election but President Donald Trump has rejected allegations that his election victory was influenced by Russia, at times questioning findings from his own agencies.

An inquiry led by former FBI director Robert Mueller found no evidence of a criminal conspiracy between Mr Trump's 2016 presidential campaign team and Moscow.

Mr Murphy's complaint was released by the Democrat-led House Intelligence Committee,

which has asked Mr Murphy to testify to Congress later in the month. The whistleblower reprisal complaint, filed on Tuesday, sets out a number of allegations against former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, current Acting Secretary Chad Wolf and his deputy, Ken Cuccinelli.

Mr Murphy says that, between March 2018 and August 2020, there was a "repeated pattern of abuse of authority, attempted censorship of intelligence analysis and improper administration of an intelligence program related to Russian efforts to influence and undermine US interests".

He says he was instructed by Mr Wolf in mid-May to "cease providing intelligence assessments on the threat of Russian interference... and instead start reporting on interference activities by China and Iran". These instructions came directly from White House National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien, the complaint says.

Moria migrants: Greek ships to help shelter 13,000 after fire



Greece is sending three ships to help house thousands of migrants sleeping rough on the island of Lesbos after fire destroyed their overcrowded camp. For a second night families slept on roads, and in fields and car parks after fleeing Moria camp, where about 13,000 had been living in squalor. A blaze engulfed Moria on Tuesday night before another wiped out any remaining tents on Wednesday. About 400 teenagers and children have been flown to mainland Greece. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron have agreed on a plan for the EU to take in about 400 unaccompanied minors from Lesbos, AFP news agency reports. It is not yet clear if they will be the ones already flown to mainland Greece. The EU has tried previously to resettle migrants among different member states but only a minority have been transferred from overcrowded camps in Greece and Italy. A quota system was rejected by a group of member states. The Greek ferry Blue Star Chios has now docked at Sigri, a Lesbos port about 100km (60 miles) from the main town Mytilene. It has capacity to house 1,000 migrants, and Greece is also sending two naval vessels to provide emergency

accommodation. Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi said about 2,000 people would be temporarily sheltered on the ships. He also said efforts were under way to provide shelter near the devastated Moria camp site. Mr Mitarachi said tensions had been running high in the camp because a 15-day quarantine had been imposed after a migrant tested positive for coronavirus last week. By Wednesday, 35 people linked to the camp had tested positive for coronavirus, and there is concern on Lesbos now that most of them need to be urgently located. Caroline Willeman, the Moria co-ordinator for medical charity Médecins Sans

Frontières (MSF), told the BBC that "they had initially been isolated, but of course in the chaos of the last two days they have once again been dispersed within the wider community". "We had been told last night that eight out of the 35 cases had again been located and isolated."

Belarus opposition politician told she would be deported 'alive or in bits'

A detained Belarusian opposition leader has said she feared for her life when security officers threw a bag over her head during an attempt to deport her. Through her lawyer, Maria Kolesnikova said she was forced into a van and told that if she did not leave willingly she would be removed "alive or in bits".

She is now seeking a criminal case against Belarusian security forces including the KGB, her lawyer said. Mass unrest has gripped Belarus since last month's disputed polls.

Ms Kolesnikova is one of three women who joined forces to challenge President Alexander Lukashenko in August's election. She is the last of the three women to remain inside Belarus after she resisted attempts to forcibly deport her into Ukraine earlier this week.

The main opposition leader, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, says she won 60-70% of the election in places where votes were properly counted. She fled to Lithuania after she was detained in August. In a statement filed by her lawyer, she said she had been forced into the van by masked men on Monday in the capital, Minsk.

"It was stated that if I did not voluntarily leave the Republic of Belarus, I would be taken out anyway, alive or in bits. There were also threats to imprison me for up to 25 years." Ms Kolesnikova was driven to the Ukrainian border with two other people, but she prevented officials forcibly expelling her by tearing up her passport and throwing it out of a car window, those who travelled with her said.

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NY to launch 'COVID-19 report card' to track virus in public schools

New York will monitor COVID-19 cases in public schools with a tracker that will be updated daily. The COVID-19 Report Card will feature data provided to the state Department of Health by school districts, local health departments and laboratories. The information will include positive cases among students and staff, whether the school or district and student and staff are participating in in-person classes, remote learning or a

hybrid of the two options, and the number of students and staff onsite.

Other data that will be part of the tracker includes the percentage of onsite students and staff who test positive for COVID-19, the number of tests administered by the school, the test type, the laboratory used and the lag time in waiting for a result.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who provided details about the report card at his briefing Tuesday, said

school districts will be required to provide their information daily. The state Department of Health will update its website and there will be data for every school in the state.

"I think this will give parents confidence and teachers confidence," Cuomo said. "They will know on a day-to-day basis what exactly is happening."

The report card can be found at school.covidreportcard.health.ny.gov.

Pope praises sex and good food as 'divine' pleasures that 'come directly from God'

Pope Francis has said that the pleasures of a well-cooked meal or loving sexual intercourse are 'divine' in a newly-published book of interviews.

He believes they have unjustly fallen victim to 'overzealousness' on the part of the Catholic Church in the past.

'Pleasure arrives directly from God, it is neither Catholic, nor Christian, nor anything else, it is simply divine,' the Pope told Italian writer Carlo Petrini. He said there was no place for an 'overzealous morality' that denies pleasure, something which he admitted had existed in the church in the past. The 83-year-old, born in Jorge Bergoglio in Argentina, insisted that this was 'a wrong interpretation of the Christian message' according to RTE. 'The Church has condemned inhuman, brutish, vulgar pleasure, but has on the

other hand always accepted human, simple, moral pleasure,' he said. 'The pleasure of eating is there to keep you healthy by eating, just like sexual pleasure is there to make love more beautiful and guarantee the perpetuation of the species.'

He added: 'The pleasure of eating and sexual pleasure come from God.' Pope Francis added that opposing views 'have caused enormous harm, which can still be felt strongly today'. The book 'TerraFutura, conversations with Pope Francis on integral ecology', written by Petrini, was published on September 9. Mr Petrini is the founder of the global 'slow food' movement created in the 1980s in opposition to 'fast food'. The interviews focus on the pope's vision of environmentalism with a social face, outlined in his 2015 encyclical 'Laudato Si'.



The launch of the COVID-19 database comes as approximately 700 public schools begin the 2020-21 academic year. While some schools are opting for in-person classes or a hybrid model that involves both in-person and remote learning, others chose to begin with remote classes. New York had a 0.96% infection rate Sunday, the 32nd consecutive day the state's positivity rate has been below 1%. Total hospitalizations increased by 32 to 445. The number of patients in intensive care units is at 114, and there are 52 intubated patients. Five

deaths were reported on Sunday. While the statewide rate is encouraging, there are a handful of regions that reported infection rates of at least 1%. Long Island and the Hudson Valley had positivity rates of 1.5%. In the Capital Region, 1.3% of tests were positive for COVID-19. • New York's travel advisory now covers 35 states after Delaware, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia were added to the list. Under the advisory, visitors from those states must quarantine for 14 days after arriving in New York. Two U.S. territories, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, were removed from the advisory.

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US President Trump says Kim Jong Un is in great health

Woodward's book revealed that Trump believed that when he met Kim Jong Un for the summit he lent legitimacy to the North Korean autocratic leader, according to a report by the Associated Press.



US president Donald Trump on Thursday said that no one should underestimate the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as he is in good health. Trump wrote in a tweet, "Kim Jong Un is in good health. Never underestimate him!" Several media outlets had reported in the months of April and May, that the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had undergone a heart surgery and speculations arose regarding his health. There were reports that his sister Kim Yo Jong was being prepped for taking his position.

Kim made two appearances in the public after these reports had

surfaced but speculations regarding his health remain. Trump posted several

tweets after excerpts from Washington Post associate editor Bob Woodward's book 'Rage' came out in the public. The book is a sequel to 'Fear: Trump in the White House'.

Woodward's book revealed that Trump believed that when he met Kim Jong Un for the summit, he lent legitimacy to the North Korean autocratic leader,

according to a report by the Associated Press. Trump also believes that intelligence officials have wrongly assessed that Pyongyang would never give up its nuclear weapons. "It takes me two days. I met... I gave up nothing, they just can't sell it," US president told Bob Woodward during an interview. The book also

highlights how Kim Jong Un gave a graphical account to Trump about how he got his uncle killed. US president Donald Trump has come under huge criticism after the book revealed that he downplayed the effects of coronavirus. The revelations have come out in the public eight weeks before United States goes into polls.

US could restrict funds for 'malign activities' over Navalny poisoning

The Kremlin critic is being treated in Berlin's Charite hospital after falling ill on a Russian domestic flight last month. Germany says he was poisoned with a Soviet-style Novichok nerve agent.

The United States told the UN Security Council on Thursday it would work with allies to hold accountable those responsible for poisoning Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, including "through restricting? funds for ?malign activities." "Russia has used? chemical nerve agents? from the 'Novichok' group? in the past.? The Russian people have ?a right to express their views? without fear of retribution of any kind," the deputy US ambassador to the United Nations, Cherith Norman-Chalet, told a

council meeting on chemical weapons in Syria. The Kremlin critic is being treated in Berlin's Charite hospital after falling ill on a Russian domestic flight last month. Germany says he was poisoned with a Soviet-style Novichok nerve agent. Moscow has said it has seen no evidence that Navalny, 44, was poisoned. "We urge Russia to cooperate fully with the international community's investigation," Norman-Chalet told the council. "Wherever the evidence leads, we will work with allies and the international

community to hold perpetrators accountable, including through restricting ?funds for? malign activities." Russian UN Ambassador Vassily Nebeniza said Russia wanted to know what happened to Navalny but that Russian authorities did not have any grounds to open an investigation as they did not have any evidence. "Our doctors who, by the way, saved Alexey Navalny did not find any chemical weapon substances in his analyses. The German laboratory claims it did," he told the Security Council.

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US remembers 9/11 as coronavirus pandemic alters tribute traditions

In short, the anniversary of 9/11 is a complicated occasion in a maelstrom of a year, as the US grapples with a health crisis, searches its soul over racial injustice and prepares to choose a leader to chart a path forward.

Americans are commemorating 9/11 with tributes that have been altered by coronavirus precautions and woven into the presidential campaign, drawing both President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden to pay respects at the same memorial without crossing paths.

In New York, a dispute over coronavirus-safety precautions is leading to split-screen remembrances Friday, one at the September 11 memorial plaza at the World Trade Center and another on a nearby corner. The Pentagon's observance will be so restricted that not even victims' families can attend, though small groups can visit the memorial there later in the day.

Trump and Biden are both headed — at different times — to the Flight 93 National Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Trump is speaking at the morning ceremony, the White House said. Biden

plans to pay respects there in the afternoon after attending the observance at the 9/11 memorial in New York. Meanwhile, Vice President Mike Pence is also due at ground zero — and then at the alternate ceremony a few blocks away.

In short, the anniversary of 9/11 is a complicated occasion in a maelstrom of a year, as the U.S. grapples with a health crisis, searches its soul over racial injustice and prepares to choose a leader to chart a path forward.

Still, 9/11 families say it's important for the nation to pause and remember the hijacked-plane attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people at the trade center, at the Pentagon and near Shanksville on September 11, 2001, shaping American policy, perceptions of safety and daily life in places from airports to office buildings. "I know that the heart of America beats on 9/11 and, of course, thinks about that tragic day. I don't think

that people forget," says Anthoula Katsimatides, who lost her brother John and is now on the board of the National Sept. 11 Memorial & Museum.

Friday will mark Trump's second time observing the 9/11 anniversary at the Flight 93 memorial, where he made remarks in 2018. Biden spoke at the memorial's dedication in 2011, when he was vice president.

The ground zero ceremony in New York has a longstanding custom of not allowing politicians to speak, though they can attend. Biden did so as vice president in 2010, and Trump as a candidate in 2016. Though the candidates will be focused on the commemorations, the political significance of their focus on Shanksville is hard to ignore: Pennsylvania is a must-win state for both. Trump won it by less than a percentage point in 2016.

Around the country, some communities



have canceled 9/11 commemorations because of the pandemic, while others are going ahead, sometimes with modifications. The New York memorial is changing one of its ceremony's central traditions: having relatives read the names of the dead, often adding poignant tributes. Thousands of family members are still invited. But they'll hear a recording of the names from speakers spread around the vast plaza, a plan that memorial leaders felt would avoid close contact at a stage but still allow families to remember their loved ones at the place where they died.

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India needs a law to compensate the wrongly-imprisoned

instead of seeking to undermine public order or create disunity. Furthermore, Khan had been detained on February 13, 2020 - a good two months after the speech - thus implying that there was, at best, a tenuous connection between his intention and any genuine apprehension that he would cause public disorder.

As the HC judgment makes clear, the State had no case that justified keeping Khan in preventive detention, and depriving him of his liberty. In fact, the circumstances - Khan was served a preventive detention order immediately after he had been granted bail in another case - strongly suggest that this was vindictive State action. While the

eventual judgment setting him at liberty is, therefore, to be welcomed, it is important to remember that at the time of his release, Khan had spent months in jail, all under the stated goal of "preventing" future crime, and without a trial.

In this respect, however, Khan's case is not unique or isolated. Earlier this year, the Jammu and Kashmir HC found that many detention orders that had been issued after the effective nullification of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, had no merit at all, and deserved to be quashed. Once again, these orders came after the detainees had already spent many months in prison. On multiple occasions, governments have attempted to

circumvent judicial orders, as well as the formal expiry of detention periods, by slapping fresh charges on troublesome individuals, in order to keep them in jail. The problem is not restricted to preventive detention: The Indian justice system is notoriously slow, and on more than one occasion in recent years, individuals accused in terror attacks have been released after 11, 14 - or even 23 - years in prison, with, at the time of the final hearings, the State's case falling apart.

This raises an important issue of justice: If individuals have been deprived of months and years of their life for no justifiable reason at all, restitution of some sort must be provided. While lost time

cannot be returned, and harassment cannot be undone, at the very least, compensation can mitigate some of the harm caused.

This is not only a question of justice, but also a question of deterrence: A part of the reason why the State feels comfortable with incarcerating people for long periods without any justification is that it is a costless exercise. At best, months or years later, a court will find these individuals innocent, and order their release. But nothing more will happen, and State authorities will not be held to account for their wrongful action. Therefore, it is important to have rules for stringent compensation in cases such as Khan's - and others - where

courts find that detention or imprisonment has been entirely unjustified. Unfortunately, in 2014, when this issue was raised before the Supreme Court (SC), in the context of people who had spent many years in jail upon false accusations of a terror attack, SC rejected arguments for compensation, on the basis that it would set a wrong precedent. This, it is submitted with respect, is an incorrect view that must be urgently reconsidered. Not only is compensation for wrongful imprisonment a matter of justice, but it is also the first step on the road to holding a powerful State - that regularly abuses vaguely-worded preventive detention laws and the slow-moving justice system - to account.

So How Bad Is India's Economic Crisis? Brace Yourself.

Implementation, are merely official confirmation of what was widely expected. In fact, their estimate of a contraction of 23.9 percent at constant (2011-12) prices is worse than what the general expectations were for the first quarter's GDP, and has led to a general downward revision of the estimated growth rate for the financial year 2020-21. The IMF's World Economic Outlook in June had put the expected rate of decrease in India's GDP for the financial year 2020-21 at 4.5%, while other estimates before this released by the NSO had put it in the 5% to 6% range. The revised estimates are putting the rate of contraction of GDP for the financial year 2020-21 to be in the 7% to 11.5% range. How bad is this?

By historical standards, the quarterly drop of 23.9% is the largest since we began releasing quarterly GDP data in 1996. Looking at annual rates of change of GDP for which we can go back to much earlier times, there are only four instances of a contraction in the post-Independence period: 1957-58, 1965-66, 1972-73, and 1979-80. The largest drop thus far was 5.2 percent in 1979-80. Even if the growth rates for the remaining three quarters of the financial year turn out to be zero (no growth or contraction compared to the same quarter in the previous financial year), which is highly unrealistic, the

annual rate of contraction will be approximately 6%. Therefore, given the current outlook, the rate of contraction in 2020-21 will easily be the highest in the post-Independence era.

Of course, the Covid-19 crisis

estimates, but even here, the economic impact for India does not look good, especially in comparison with other emerging and developing countries in Asia included in this report, such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines.



is not unique to India. It is a global shock that is playing havoc across the world. Therefore, to have a sense of how bad the economic impact has been, we should also compare India with other countries. According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook, the expected reduction in GDP in the financial year 2020-21 are the following: for the world as a whole, it is 4.9%; for emerging markets and developing economies, it is 3%; and for low-income developing countries, it is 1%. Of course, all these numbers are provisional

Are other economic indicators in line with what the GDP estimates are suggesting?

India has a large informal sector that contributes about half of its GDP. As is well known, the measurement of informal sector output is largely a matter of guesswork and therefore, we do not have good estimates of how badly this sector has been hit. However, some surveys carried out by various researchers after the crisis broke give us some ideas. One such study by researchers at the Azim Premji University on the effect of the crisis on self-employed, casual,

and regular wage workers across 12 states of India between mid-April to mid-May reported a 64% drop in earnings, which is more than two and a half-times the reported decrease in quarterly GDP. Another study by

researchers at the Centre for Economic Performance at the LSE that surveyed urban workers found that earnings fell by 48 percent in April and May compared to January and February. Even if we make the conservative assumption that from mid-May to the end of June, there has been some improvement in this regard, these and similar other studies suggest a bigger drop in GDP than what the 23.9% figure suggests.

A sharp rise in unemployment would be another indicator of the economic impact of the crisis. According to CMIE estimates, the unemployment rate peaked to above 23% in the months of April and May, nearly three times what it was in the months of January and February, and came down to 11% in June. This is in line with the reported drop in the quarterly GDP

figure.

Another interesting indicator of economic activity, at least for urban and semi-urban areas, is electricity consumption. A World Bank study compared daily electricity consumption during the lockdown to predicted levels and found that electricity consumption was 30% below normal levels at the end of March. Over the three months that constitute the first quarter, namely, April, May and June, the average daily drop in electricity consumption level was 24%, 13.5%, and 8.2%, respectively.

Therefore, whatever the limitations of using the GDP as a measure of economic activity might be, there are two immediate conclusions one can draw from the reported quarterly GDP figure. First, the negative economic impact of the crisis has been large for India whether one looks at its own past record or the contemporary experience of other countries. Second, the drop in GDP is in line with other macroeconomic indicators, but very likely under-estimates the impact on the informal economy where a vast majority of the population is employed, which implies that the crisis has hit the poor harder. Given the large fraction of the population that is poor, the drop in GDP does not fully capture how badly the crisis has affected people's lives.

"Any Trajectory" Possible In India-China Stand-Off, Talks Critical : Sources

extremely challenging from a military stand-point. Indian and Chinese soldiers on Finger 4 ridges are presently separated by a few hundred metres.

Significantly, Indian soldiers deployed in South Pangong, where the Indian army pre-empted a Chinese effort to unilaterally alter the Line of Actual Control, have been given robust rules of engagement where they can respond with deadly force in the event that Chinese infantry soldiers close-in to their positions.

After 200 Chinese soldiers moved to dominate the heights in South Pangong on the night on August 29-30, Indian soldiers were deployed widely across the region dominating key positions such as Mukhpari, Gurung Hill, Magar Hill, Rezang La and Richin La. These soldiers have been told that they can engage Chinese forces if the perimeter defences of their positions, composed primarily of barbed wire, is breached. "If they try to cross that, it will be a red line," sources said.

Any decision to engage Chinese forces with lethal forces will,

however, be decided by local military commanders, who are monitoring the ground situation constantly.

On Monday, nearly 20 Chinese soldiers armed with spears attempted to evict Indian soldiers from their position on the LAC near Mukhpari. Chinese soldiers also fired warning shots. NDTV has now learnt that such attempts at intimidation by the Chinese are happening "almost on a daily basis". Government sources have explained that China does hold a few heights near the southern banks of the Pangong lake and that the Indian army does not dominate either Black Top or Helmet -- two features which are the Chinese side of the LAC. China is believed to have installed a camera atop Black Top to monitor nearby areas. After the Chinese move in South Pangong was detected by Indian observation, there was "a race for heights". On the southern bank of Pangong, "it was quits" -- in other words, India and China dominate approximately the

same number of key heights. However, India dominates the Spanggur Gap to the West and all Chinese positions along the banks of the Spanggur Tso, a lake in the region.

The ground situation in South Pangong remains tense. As many as 5,000 to 7,000 Chinese soldiers are deployed here with as many as 50,000 Chinese soldiers deployed across the LAC in Eastern Ladakh. "We are 1-1 across Eastern Ladakh," said the top government official. "If he expands [deploys more numbers], we will expand. It will not be business as usual," he added. The Indian Army and the Air Force are working on a constant basis to monitor the air situation in Eastern Ladakh as China "has built up sizeable number of air assets". 150 aircraft - fighters, helicopters, electronic warning assets and tankers -- have been deployed on the Chinese side of the LAC in the Ladakh theatre. This presence is being matched by the Indian Air Force. Part of the



process of identifying de-escalation in the region will be when the Chinese move back their air assets from the region including surface-to-air missile units, which have been widely deployed.

Despite the ground situation, there is hope that "both sides are trying to stop the actual shooting from happening". There have been multiple rounds of talks at diplomatic and military levels which have resulted in partial Chinese withdrawal in the Galwan and North Pangong region, nowhere close to India's expectations after the

Chinese moved into areas stretching from the Depsang Plains, Galwan, Hot Springs, Gogra, North and South Pangong in May this year.

With Indian and Chinese Foreign Ministers set to meet in Moscow later this week, and there is a sense of anticipation and hope that the potential for a clash between India and China is taken out of the equation. "We are not in any position of weakness," asserted the top official who spoke to NDTV. If there is a conflict, "there will be a price to pay on both sides".

Trump Nobel Peace Prize nomination-what you need to know



Adding that he was not a big Trump supporter, he added. "The committee should look at the facts and judge him on the facts - not on the way he behaves sometimes." Of course a nomination is not the same as winning - we won't know the winner for another 13 months - so what can we make of this news?

So who gets to nominate a person?

For a nomination alone, the barrier to entry is low: all nominations from heads of state or politicians serving at a national level are accepted. University professors, directors of foreign policy institutes, past recipients of a Nobel Prize and members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee are also among those deemed qualified to submit a nomination for the prize. The nominations require no invitation and as long they are entered before 1 February of the qualifying year, they will be accepted.

For the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize -

the winner of which has not yet been announced - there were 318 candidates. The Norwegian Nobel Committee doesn't publicly comment on its nominees, which are kept secret for 50 years.

Mr Trump been nominated before?

Yes. And for the second time, he has Mr Tybring-Gjedde to thank. In 2018, the right-wing politician was one of two Norwegian lawmakers to nominate Mr Trump for the same prize, then for his efforts to bring reconciliation to North and South Korea.

Mr Trump did not take home the prize that year, but Mr Tybring-Gjedde, a member of the conservative Progress Party, insists the US president meets the criteria this time.

Last month, Israel and the UAE reached a deal to normalise relations, with Israel agreeing to suspend its controversial plans to annex part of the occupied West

Bank - announced by Mr Trump in a surprise statement.

It is just the third Israel-Arab peace deal since Israel's declaration of independence in 1948, and marks the first official diplomatic relationship between Israel and a Gulf Arab country. Palestinian leaders were reportedly caught off guard by the agreement.

"This is a hard earned and well-deserved honour for this president," White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said on Wednesday. "Career politicians merely talk about the kind of results that this president has achieved on the world stage."

President Trump's critics say he is a polarising figure who exploits divisions rather than trying to bring Americans together.

Has a US president been nominated before?

Mr Trump is one of several US presidents to receive the peace prize nomination, including President William Howard Taft, President Herbert Hoover and President Franklin Roosevelt. And if he were to receive the coveted award, Mr Trump would be the fifth US president to win, following Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, Woodrow Wilson in 1920, Jimmy Carter in 2002 and Barack Obama in 2009.

Mr Obama's nomination - after just

months on the job - was met with criticism in the US, with some arguing he had not made an impact worthy of the award. Among his detractors? Mr Trump, who tweeted in 2013 calling for Mr Obama's award to be rescinded. The former Nobel secretary Geir Lundestad later said he regretted Mr Obama's selection. "Even many of Obama's supporters believed that the prize was a mistake," he told the AP news agency. "In that sense the committee didn't achieve what it had hoped for." Mr Obama donated the \$1.4m (£1.08m) award to charity.

Have there been controversial nominations before?

While the award's most famous recipients include Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa - all who won the prize - the broad criteria for nominations means that past nominees have included highly unorthodox, and controversial, selections. Adolf Hitler was nominated for the peace prize in 1939 by a member of the Swedish parliament. Reportedly submitted in satire, the nomination was withdrawn soon after. A few years later, the Soviet leader Josef Stalin was nominated for the same award, twice, garnering nods in 1945 - for his efforts ending WW2 - and again in 1948. After nominations are submitted, the recipient is selected by a five-person Nobel Committee, which is appointed by the Norwegian Parliament. The winner of the 2021 prize will not be announced until October of next year.



The West Coast is Burning

NASA's images from space show the full, devastating extent of the West Coast wildfires. More than 85 significant wildfires are ripping across the West Coast, burning hundreds of thousands of acres & causing unprecedented burning in Washington and Oregon and exacerbating what has already become California's biggest wildfire season ever.

The fires have killed at least seven people, injured many others, and destroyed buildings in California, Oregon, and Washington. Satellite images of the blazes reveal their astonishing scale.

More than 360,000 acres have burned in Oregon, which has 35 active fires. In Washington, meanwhile, more than 330,000 acres have burned since Monday — more than double the state's total from all of 2019.

In California, multiple large blazes are spreading quickly, including the nearly 176,000-acre Creek Fire in Fresno and Madera counties and the 12,600-acre El Dorado Fire in San Bernardino County, which was ignited by pyrotechnics at a gender-reveal party.

Between Monday and Wednesday, the West Coast fires killed at least seven

people, including a 12-year-old boy and his grandmother in Marion County, Oregon, and a 1-year-old boy in northeastern Washington.

"The geographic scale and intensity of what is transpiring is truly jarring," Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote on Twitter.

Longer, more intense and destructive wildfire seasons like this are linked to climate change: As the planet's temperature rises, dry conditions and heat waves become more common, increasing the likelihood of fires. California's average fire season

now lasts 75 days longer than it did in the early 2000s, according to the state's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

"We are essentially living in a mega fire era,". The skies of the Bay Area and Northern California turned a dark orange as 90 major fires burn in the western United States, from San Diego to the Canadian border. At least seven people have died as a result of the fires, which have already burned 2.5 million acres in California alone. Despite heavy coverage in the mainstream media, however, few outlets are highlighting the

link between the blazes and the accelerating climate crisis. "The fact is that TV news is completely abdicating its responsibility when it comes to telling the truth of what the West is dealing with right now," says Leah Stokes, assistant professor of political science at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a researcher on climate and energy policy. "This is climate change. It's not rocket science. And when will the media start calling it that?" The following images from space, captured by NASA satellites, show the scale of the current blazes.

California fires burn record 2 Million acres

Record set early in the season as firefighters battle to contain several wildfires ahead of forecast hot, dry winds

Wildfires have burned more than 2m acres (809,000 hectares) in California this year, setting a state record even as crews battled dozens of growing blazes in sweltering temperatures Monday that strained the electrical grid and threatened power outages for millions.

The previous high was 1.96m acres (793,184 hectares) burned in 2018. the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, began tracking the numbers in 1987.

Lynne Tolmachoff, spokeswoman for Cal Fire, said the most striking thing about the record was how early it was set, with the most dangerous part of the year ahead.

"It's a little unnerving because September and October are historically our worst months for fires," she said. "It's usually hot, and the fuels really dry out. And we see more of our wind events."



Firefighters struggled to corral several dangerous blazes ahead of dry, hot winds predicted to raise fire danger to critical levels in the coming days. Evacuation orders were expanded to more mountain communities as the largest blaze, the Creek Fire,

churned through the Sierra National Forest.

Debra Rios wasn't home when the order came to evacuate her hometown of Auberry, just northeast of Fresno. Sheriff's deputies went to her ranch property to pick up her 92-year-

old mother, Shirley MacLean. They reunited at an evacuation center.

"I hope like heck the fire doesn't reach my little ranch," Rios said. "It's not looking good right now. It's an awfully big fire."

Mountain roads were filled with

cars and trucks leaving the community of about 2,300 people.

Firefighters working in steep terrain saved the tiny town of Shaver Lake from flames that roared down hillsides toward a marina. About 30 houses were destroyed in the remote hamlet of Big Creek, according to resident Toby Wait.

"About half the private homes in town burned down," he said. "Words cannot even begin to describe the devastation of this community." A school, church, library, historic general store and a major hydroelectric plant were spared in the community of about 200 residents, Wait told the Fresno Bee.

Sheriff's deputies went door to door to make sure residents were complying with orders to leave. Officials hoped to keep the fire from pushing west, possibly toward Yosemite National Park.

Climate change largely missing from Biden, Trump campaigns as wildfires rage across the West Coast

Historic fires are raging across the western United States ahead of what scientists say is the typical peak of wildfire season. Hurricane Laura devastated parts of the Gulf Coast last month, while swaths of Iowa are recovering from a derecho that brought hurricane force winds to the Midwest.

The streak of disasters has left millions of Americans reeling. But it's barely had an impact on the campaign for the White House, in part because of the vulnerabilities it highlights for President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden.

The president is already facing multiple challenges, including the pandemic, joblessness and social unrest, and can ill afford another one. When he talks about California, where fires have killed at least a dozen people and threatened thousands of homes, it's mostly to blast the state's Democratic leaders.

And for Biden, the spreading fires are a reminder to the party's progressive base that he doesn't embrace some of the most liberal elements of the Green New Deal, the grand plan for tackling climate change.

"The Biden campaign understands that a full embrace of an aggressive climate change agenda could create problems for them in Upper Midwest," said Dan Schnur, who served as an adviser to former California Gov. Pete Wilson and Arizona Sen. John McCain. "Trump has shown no desire to talk about California beyond using it as a liberal punching bag to make his case to his conservative base."

Still, climate activists say the moment underscores the need for Washington to support the Green New Deal, an ambitious — and likely costly — plan to wean the U.S. from fossil fuels and drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions.

It's no surprise that Trump isn't talking about the fact that America is literally in flames on his watch — but why isn't Biden?" said Rebecca Katz, a political strategist who has worked with Democratic congressional candidates supporting the measure. "For Democrats to not connect what's happening on the West Coast to Trump's failure on climate change is just political malpractice."

The Biden campaign's response to the fires is especially notable



since his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, represents California in the Senate. She was campaigning in Miami on Thursday, but her spokesperson, Sabrina Singh, said Biden and Harris "have been closely monitoring the wildfires raging across the state and highlighting the urgent need to address the threat of climate change."

Biden tweeted that climate change "is already here — and we're witnessing its devastating effects every single day."

"We have to get President Trump out of the White House and treat this crisis like the existential threat that it is," he said.

While Biden hasn't embraced the full Green New Deal, he has promised to make creating new green jobs and drastically reducing U.S. carbon emissions part of a larger recovery plan designed

to revive the economy after the coronavirus abates. Biden's top advisers note that many of his proposals will move the country toward the Green New Deal, but some activists worry it is not ambitious enough.

"I'm looking outside my window right now. Literally the world looks like it's on fire. For young people across the board, but especially young Latinos, we also care very deeply about climate change, not just like immigration," said Christian Arana, policy director for the California-based Latino Community Foundation. "This is a perfect moment to get on TikTok or do an interview with Teen Vogue or whoever to talk about these issues."

Trump spoke with California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday "to express his condolences for the loss of life and reiterate the

administration's full support to help those on the frontlines of the fires," according to White House spokesman Judd Deere.

But the president has a history of criticizing California's response to wildfires and threatening to withhold federal funding.

In 2019, months after the deadliest wildfire in California history tore through the town of Paradise in Northern California, Trump said the Federal Emergency Management Agency should stop giving the state money and blamed the fires on poor forest management. Fire scientists say climate change, not forest management, is a driving factor behind the state's fires becoming worse and more deadly.

Still, Trump has always

approved California's request for major disaster declarations, as he did Aug. 22 as the state battled blazes across Northern California.

That approval came a day after he again blamed California for mismanagement and Newsom hit back in a video that aired during the Democratic National Convention in which he highlighted Trump's threats.

"Just today the president of the United States threatened the state of California, 40 million Americans who happen to live in the state of California, to defund our efforts on wildfire suppression because he said we hadn't raked enough leaves. You can't make that up," Newsom said.

Trump visited Iowa last month to meet with officials there about the derecho, and he surveyed damage on the Louisiana-Texas border following Hurricane Laura. Trump visited California in November 2018 after Paradise was ravaged by the most deadly wildfire in state history. But he currently has no plans to visit areas on the West Coast impacted by the fires, according to a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The official, who was not authorized to speak about the president's travel plans, said it would be unwise for Trump to visit while the fires are still active as it would divert key first responder resources away from the fire fight.

California ablaze: Striking satellite imagery shows how the fires are unfolding

Historic wildfires are raging across California as a result of extreme weather conditions, forcing tens of thousands of citizens to flee their homes and businesses. Eight lives have been lost and more than 3,300 structures have been destroyed as of Tuesday. More than 7,500 wildfires have burned 2.2 million acres in California in recent weeks. This is a record number of acres burned and this year's fire season has another four months to go.

25 major wildfires located up and down the state are being battled by nearly 14,000 firefighters. The Oak Fire broke out in Mendocino County on September 7 and grew quickly.

Recent strong winds and low humidity will fan existing fires and can cause new fires to spread quickly.

Much of the Central Valley remains under an air quality alert from the National Weather Service. The



concentration of "the tiny particles (PM2.5) in the Bay Area is roughly five times the daily average limit set by the EPA," said Coty Jen, assistant professor at the Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies at Carnegie Mellon University.

"Even healthy people are reporting

headaches, bloody noses, etc., during this current smoke event," Jen said.

Air quality index for California and surrounding areas:

Several major fires are scorching Northern California, and there are hundreds of additional blazes around the state.

The LNU Lightning Complex to the north of San Francisco in California's wine country has been the deadliest and most destructive of the three as of Tuesday. It has burned more than 375,000 acres and was 91% contained. The SCU Lightning Complex to the southeast of the city has burned more than 396,000 acres and was 94% contained. The CZU Lightning Complex, south in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties, has burned more than 86,000 acres and was 81% contained. Although it tore through Big Basin Redwoods State Park, the ancient old-growth trees continued to stand tall.

California fires rage as winds continue and power is shut off

Fire risk is high across California, with two of the three largest fires burning in the San Francisco Bay area.

New wildfires ravaged bone-dry California during a scorching Labor Day weekend trapping campers and prompting the state's largest utility to turn off power to 172,000 customers to try to prevent its power lines and other equipment from sparking more fires.

California is heading into what is traditionally the teeth of the wildfire season, and already it has set a record with two million acres (809,000 hectares) burned this year. The previous record was set just two years ago and included the deadliest wildfire in state history - the Camp Fire that swept through the community of Paradise and killed 85 people.

That fire was started by Pacific Gas & Electric power lines. Liability from billions of dollars in claims from that and other fires forced the utility to seek bankruptcy protection. To guard against new wildfires and new liability, PG&E last year began pre-emptive power shutoffs when conditions are exceptionally dangerous.

That is the situation now in Northern California, where strong and dry winds are expected until Wednesday. PG&E received criticism for its handling of planned outages last year. The utility said it has learned from past problems, "and this year will be making events smaller in size, shorter in length and smarter for customers".

Two of the three largest fires in state history are burning in the San Francisco Bay Area. More than 14,000 firefighters are battling those fires and about two dozen others around California.

The fire danger is also high in Southern California, where new fires were burning in Los

Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego counties. The US Forest Service on Monday decided to close all eight national forests in the region and to shutter campgrounds statewide.

"The wildfire situation throughout California is dangerous and must be taken seriously," said Randy Moore, regional forester for the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region that covers California. "Existing fires are displaying extreme fire behaviour, new fire starts are likely, weather conditions are worsening, and we simply do not have enough resources to fully fight and contain every fire."

Lynne Tolmachoff, spokeswoman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said it is "unnerving" to have reached a record for acreage burned when September and October usually are the worst months for fires because vegetation has dried out and high winds are more common.

While the two mammoth Bay Area fires were largely contained after burning for three weeks, firefighters struggled to corral several other major blazes ahead of the expected winds. Evacuation orders were expanded to more mountain communities on Monday as the largest blaze, the Creek Fire, churned through the Sierra National Forest in Central California.

It was one of many recent major fires that have displayed terrifyingly swift movement. The fire moved 24 kilometres (15 miles) in a single day during the weekend and burned 145.04 square km (56 square miles). Since starting

on Friday from an unknown cause, it has burned 549sq km (212sq miles).

Debra Rios was not home on Monday when the order came to evacuate her hometown of Auberry, just northeast of Fresno. Sheriff's deputies went to her ranch property to pick up her 92-year-old mother, Shirley MacLean. They reunited at an evacuation centre.

"I hope like heck the fire doesn't reach my little ranch," Rios said. "It's not looking good right now. It's an awfully big fire."

Mountain roads saw a steady stream of cars and trucks leaving the community of about 2,300 on Monday afternoon.

Firefighters working in steep terrain saved the tiny town of Shaver Lake from flames that roared down hillsides towards a marina. About 30 houses were destroyed in the remote hamlet of Big Creek, resident Toby Wait said.

"About half the private homes in town burned down," he said. "Words cannot even begin to describe the

devastation of this community."

A school, church, library, an historic general store and a major hydroelectric plant were spared in the community of about 200 residents, Wait told the Fresno Bee.

Sheriff's deputies went door to door to make sure residents were complying with orders to evacuate. Officials hoped to keep the fire from pushing west towards Yosemite National Park.

On Monday night, a military helicopter tried but failed to land near Lake Edison to rescue people trapped by the fire, the Fresno Fire Department said on Twitter. The department tweeted: "Military pilots tried valiantly to land but heavy smoke conditions prevented a safe approach, another effort will be made shortly to evacuate the trapped people in Lake Edison and China Peak using night vision."

In Southern California, crews scrambled to douse several fires that roared to life in searing temperatures, including one that closed

mountain roads in Angeles National Forest and forced the evacuation of the historic Mount Wilson Observatory. Late Monday night, the Los Angeles County Fire Department told residents of Duarte, Bradbury and Monrovia near the forest to get ready for a possible evacuation.

Cal Fire said a blaze in San Bernardino County called the El Dorado Fire started Saturday morning and was caused by a smoke-generating pyrotechnic device used by a couple to reveal their unborn baby's gender. In eastern San Diego County, a fire destroyed at least 10 structures after burning 41.44sq km (16sq miles) and prompting evacuations near the remote community of Alpine in the Cleveland National Forest.

California has seen 900 wildfires since August 15, many of them started by an intense series of thousands of lightning strikes in mid-August. There have been eight fire deaths and more than 3,300 structures destroyed.





America remembers 9/11, 19 years later

If you are of a certain age you remember exactly where you were on Sept. 11, 2001. You also realize that our country is in a much different place today than it was then.

Back in 2001 I was a newly pinned second lieutenant in the Marine Corps, commanding a platoon at Camp Lejeune, N.C. I was so excited to serve my country. I didn't realize then that the lessons I learned, particularly about unity and teamwork, would last a lifetime. They seem particularly relevant today, when our country is so divided.

During boot camp, the drill instructors broke us down and built us back up. It didn't matter where we came from, what the color of our skin was, or what political party we supported. We were just Marines.

We were one unit, functioning in unison and depending on each other for everything. When we were judged, it was not on how we looked, because at that point we all looked the same. We had the same uniforms and "high and tight" haircuts.

There's something special about facing an obstacle, struggling and finding victory together. The ultimate challenge was The Crucible, the final test in training that simulated combat situations by emphasizing teamwork under stress.

It was a 54-hour test of endurance — 48 miles of marching with only two meals

and six hours of sleep. We were divided into groups of four and we couldn't complete all our assigned tasks without working together.

The Crucible was one of the most grueling experiences I've ever had. But once it was over — and we received our Marine Corps emblems of an eagle, globe and anchor — I felt a great sense of accomplishment and camaraderie with my team. It's something I'll never forget.

A year after graduation the unthinkable happened. We were playing war games when the first aircraft hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. A Marine yelled for us to come over and check out the TV.

When we saw the second aircraft crash into the South Tower, we knew that it was no accident. We were under attack.

That day our nation made a decision. We would defend our country against terrorism and we would do it together.

The unity that we felt in 2001 seems almost nonexistent today. We face a common enemy — the coronavirus — just like we did then. But we can't even agree on how big a threat it poses.

And our racial divisions are even more pronounced. We're blinded by anger, injustice and hatred. Protests and riots have taken place across the country.

Some people seem to think that their voices can be heard only if they vandalize businesses or destroy landmarks.

Groups of people have been demonized, and others have been misled into believing false narratives. People aren't treating each other with civility, grace, or love. In times like these, the greatest and most powerful weapon we have is love. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance.

I don't ever want to experience another terrorist attack. But don't you wish we could go back to Sept. 12, 2001? The day when flags couldn't be found in stores. People were Americans

before they were Black or White, Christian or Jewish, Republican or Democrat.

On that day we loved each other and served one another. We didn't care if we ate Chick-fil-A, purchased Goya or wore Nikes. It was all about unity.

Americans set aside so many difference Sept. 11 to fight for a common cause. We need to do that again.

We need to be loving and not hateful, civil and not rude, full of grace and not wrath. We have to come together as a unit, just like in the Marines, putting aside differences toward a common goal.

We will win as a team or we will fail as a country.

America now more vulnerable than at time of Sept. 11 attacks-we need a forward defense

On the morning of September 11, 2001 a dear friend and former CIA colleague of mine was in Manhattan when Al Qaeda terrorists struck our homeland and murdered almost 3,000 innocent people in New York City, the Pentagon and Shanksville, Pa. My friend was standing on the street near the World Trade Center when American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the North and South Towers.

Witnessing the deadliest terrorist attack in human history had the most significant impact on my former colleague's career. He later told me that the images of innocent victims jumping from the towers to their deaths remain seared in his consciousness. Up to that point he had never served in South Asia. But he would go on to serve

multiple tours in conflict zones there as well as in the Middle East, on the front lines in the fight against terrorism.

Sept. 11, 2001, was transformational for me and my colleagues in the intelligence community, State Department and military — and for our entire nation. I recall my parents' and grandparents' generations, who spoke of remembering exactly where they were when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Today everyone in their late 20s and older remembers exactly where they were on September 11, 2001.

Al Qaeda's horrific act of mass murder demonstrated that our enemies could reach us in spite of the oceans that separated us from Europe, Africa and Asia. We had become accustomed to

sending troops off to foreign lands in wartime. Now the war on terrorism had reached the continental United States. The world is even more interconnected today, including through cyberspace. This makes America even more vulnerable to attack. At the same time, security precautions at airports and federal buildings, in particular, have increased considerably since Sept. 11, 2001.

One of the most critical lessons of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks was that we need a robust forward presence to protect us, especially against threats emanating from ungoverned spaces. This includes intelligence collection, diplomacy and — when justified — military engagement so that we can detect threats and take appropriate action to prevent terrorists from striking us again.

Climate change may cause 26% habitat loss for snow trout in Himalayan rivers: Study

The study -- 'Is There Always Space at The Top'-- was published in the 'Ecological Indicators', a journal of high international reputation based at the Netherlands, on September 6. Snow trout, the iconic cold water fish species found in Himalayan rivers, would lose their habitat by 16 per cent in the next 30 years and by over 26 per cent by 2070, a new climate change study by the government's Wildlife Institute of India has found.

The study -- 'Is There Always Space at The Top'-- was published in the 'Ecological Indicators', a journal of high international reputation based at the Netherlands, on September 6. The study indicates that most of the lower altitude streams across the Himalayas would be rendered unsuitable for the existence of snow trout with the rise in temperatures.

An ensemble of 72 statistical models across the Himalayas, the study -- authored by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) scientists Aashna Sharma, Vineet Kumar Dubey, Jeyaraj Antony Johnson, Yogesh Kumar Rawal and Kuppusamy Sivakumar - reveals the

vulnerable snow trout would be squeezed into the high-altitude rivers in the Himalayas. "Our empirical findings strongly suggest that snow trout, a prime cold water fish of Himalayan rivers, would suffer a habitat loss in the future and the high-altitude areas would act as only saviours, provided suitable habitat connectivity is offered," senior scientist Kuppusamy Sivakumar told PTI. The study says mountain systems across the globe are conspicuously sensitive to ongoing climate alterations and the condition is much more detrimental in the Himalaya, where the rate of warming, and thus the glacier meltdown, is much higher than elsewhere. "The Himalayan coldwater species are concerningly most vulnerable to these changes because of their limited thermal range," it says. Funded by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), the study is a part of the government's National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE), which was launched to research the impact of climate change on the Himalayan ecosystem.

The study iterates that if the countries across the globe continue their greenhouse emissions as usual (mentioning it as the 'business-as-usual scenario'), "the species (snow trout) would lose a net habitat of 16.29% till the year 2050 which would further increase to 26.56% in the year 2070."

"As it stands, the snow trout faces serious threats due to river valley modifications, destructive fishing practices and exotic salmonid introductions," it says.

"Due to ongoing threats, its population size has been reduced drastically in Himalayan waters, hence listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List," it adds. The fish species has great commercial and recreational value and its sole presence in the high-altitude cold waters makes it a flagship species to conserve the Himalayan rivers, the study underlines. "Already exposed to numerous anthropogenic stressors, the fate of snow trout population and many co-occurring genera can be considered explicitly at a higher risk in the Himalaya," it adds. The study also flagged the



"rampant" damming of the rivers across the Himalayas, saying the presence of dams would definitely obstruct the fish mode of movements to safer havens, ultimately risking their very survival. "Our results highlight that snow trout would expand their range upwards into the high-altitude streams with a concurrent predominant range contraction in most of their lagging edges, ultimately creating a high-altitude squeeze," the study says. The study recommends some solutions such as persuasive "conservation efforts beyond political boundaries by combined decisions of the policymakers of Himalayan countries". It also includes reducing "unsustainable

harnessing of rivers for hydropower development projects and energy efficiency by improving green energy potential". They also underscore a need to focus more on climate change science in India, more so in the Himalayas, which, the team says is "predicted to be warming at a rate much higher than the global average rate of about 0.4 °C". The team detailed that never has such an extensive and rigorous ensemble methodology been used to understand the climate change impacts on any freshwater species in India. They said there was a dire need for inter-governmental policy measures -- involving India, Nepal and Bhutan -- to sustain the biodiversity of these rivers.

Beastly weather! Frosty bison walks through snow storm as up to 17 inches falls in Rocky Mountains



Winter has arrived early in the Midwest, with September snowstorms causing temperatures to plunge by more than 60 degrees in some regions.

Up to 17 feet of snow fell in mountainous areas of Wyoming on Labor Day - which marks the unofficial end of summer.

Snow also fell in nearby

Yellowstone National Park, with a bison seen walking through sleet and icy winds in one video shared on social media.

'Labor Day in Yellowstone. Surely this bison is a metaphor for something in 2020,' Twitter user Chris Frink wrote beneath the short clip.

The snow forced the closure of Yellowstone's east entrance on

Monday, which still remains blocked off to the public.

The Montana town of Red Lodge, which lays close to Yellowstone recorded 10.5 inches of snow.

Meanwhile, bison were also seen in Evergreen, Colorado on Tuesday, as snow fell for a second consecutive day.

In nearby Fort Collins,

Colorado, residents spent the morning of Labor Day monitoring the nearby Cameron Peak Wildfire.

The fire had razed 100,000 acres of land, with smoke turning the sky bright orange. Temperatures climbed into the 90s, following near record-breaking heat over the weekend. But by Tuesday, the area was

doused in snow, with temperatures plunging into the 30s.

The icy temperatures have helped fatigued firefighters catch a much-needed break in their efforts to contain the blaze. There were similar stories in the Colorado cities of Denver and Boulder, with locals battling record-high temperature of 101 degrees on Saturday.

By Tuesday, they were shoveling snow and scraping ice from the windshields of their cars.

The weather still remains icy in both cities. Denver is expected to hit highs of just 45 forecast for Wednesday, while Boulder will reach just 40.

However, the cold weather is only temporary, with temperatures expected to climb back into the 80s by the end of the week.

What slowdown? Amazon seeks to hire 33,000 people

Amazon can afford to grow its workforce: It is one of the few companies that has thrived during the coronavirus outbreak.

Amazon is on a hiring spree. In the latest sign of how it's prospering while others are faltering during the pandemic, Amazon said Wednesday it is seeking to bring aboard 33,000 people for corporate and tech roles in the next few months. It's the largest number of job openings it's had at one time, and the Seattle-based online behemoth said the hiring is not related to the jobs it typically offers ahead of the busy holiday shopping season.

Amazon can afford to grow its workforce: It is one of the few companies that has thrived during the coronavirus outbreak. People have turned to it to order groceries, supplies and other

items online, helping the company bring in record revenue and profits between April and June. That came even though it had to spend \$4 billion on cleaning supplies and to pay workers overtime and bonuses. Demand has been so high, Amazon has struggled to deliver items as fast as it normally does and had to hire 175,000 more people to help pack and ship orders in its warehouses. Walmart and Target have also seen sales soar during the pandemic.

But other retailers have had a rougher time. JC Penney, J.Crew and Brooks Brothers have all gone bankrupt. And Lord & Taylor, which has been in

business for nearly 200 years, recently said it will be closing its stores for good. Companies across other industries have announced layoffs, including Coca-Cola and American Airlines.

Amazon said the jobs will be centered around Amazon's offices across the country, including Denver, New York, Phoenix and its hometown of Seattle. The new hires will work from home at first, but the company said it does want employees to return to the office eventually.

Ardine Williams, Amazon's vice president of workforce development, said plans to build a second headquarters near



Washington, D.C., are going as planned, despite the pandemic, with 1,000 workers already hired. To fill the 33,000 jobs, Amazon said will hold an online career fair Sept. 16 to collect resumes and give people a chance talk to a recruiter. Those not interested in a job at Amazon can also get resume help, the company said.

At a similar career fair last year, about 17,000 people showed up in person and Amazon said it received more than 200,000 applications for 30,000 jobs. In July, the company said its workforce topped 1 million worldwide for the first time, making it the second-biggest US-based private employer behind Walmart Inc.

China bank stocks lose \$194 billion in perpetual value trap

Chinese bank stocks: never this cheap, rarely so unloved. Weakened by the government's call to sacrifice profitability, stung by ultra-low interest rates and the threat of souring loans, the country's Hong Kong-listed banks have seen their market value contract by \$194 billion in 2020 as of Wednesday. Their share of the MSCI China Index has shrunk to a measly 14%, near the lowest since 2005 and down from a 43% weighting in June 2015. Much of the recent focus has been on China's big four state-owned lenders, which posted profit declines of at least 10% in the first half. Shares of Industrial & Commercial Bank

of China Ltd., Agricultural Bank of China Ltd., Bank of China Ltd. and China Construction Bank Corp. are priced at half their estimated book value or less, the lowest on record. A gauge of Chinese banks in Hong Kong is down 24% this year, on pace for the worst slump since the global financial crisis. Chinese lenders have been a losing trade since 2018, when the government began tightening conditions in money markets as part of Xi Jinping's deleveraging campaign. The pandemic has brought renewed pressure, with banks enlisted to funnel cheap loans to support economic growth. Bad debt hit a record this year and

capital buffers are eroding so much that lenders including ICBC are planning a combined \$29 billion bond sale.

Shares of Chinese banks listed in Hong Kong, where valuations are typically cheaper than on the mainland, are trading near their all-time low relative to the MSCI China Index. And it could get worse: Citigroup Inc. analysts last week said investors have yet to price in the full extent of this year's profit deterioration, predicting a 23% slump versus 2019 for the banks they cover. The value of non-performing loans may rise to as much as 3.8 trillion yuan (\$556 billion) from 2.7 trillion yuan last year,

the Citigroup analysts estimated. China's perennial underperformers, bank shares have been singled out as too-cheap-too-ignore for years. Value investors keep burning their fingers: the stocks lagged a bull market in 2017, they were close to toxic in 2018 and they disappointed again in 2019. A Bloomberg index of Chinese banks in Hong Kong rose 1.9% on Tuesday, with some traders predicting a rotation into the sector from expensive industries like consumer shares. It slid as much as 1.3% before ending 0.9% lower on Wednesday, the biggest drop this month.

It's a never-ending value trap

that's once again tempting the brave. Banks have tumbled more than 7% since Zhou Liang, founder of Shanghai Minority Asset Management Co., said in June that the value case for the stocks was too compelling. And yet he says he's buying more. "The risk-reward of Chinese bank shares is really attractive right now," said Zhou. Like Zhou, Beijing Lingtongshengtai Asset Management's Dong Baozhen is keeping the faith even though bank stocks have dragged his flagship fund to a 40% loss since the end of 2017. Dong started adding the shares in 2018 and hasn't been put off by this year's slump.

US equity firm to invest Rs 7,500 crore in Reliance Retail Ventures



The Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) on Wednesday announced that Silver Lake, a US-based private equity firm, will invest Rs 7,500 crore in Reliance Retail Ventures (RRVL), a subsidiary of the RIL. The investment, RIL said, will give Silver Lake a 1.5% equity stake in its retail venture. The transaction, Reliance Industries said, values Reliance Retail Ventures at an equity value of Rs 4.21 lakh crore. Speaking about the deal, Mukesh Ambani, chairman and Managing Director of RIL, said, "I am delighted

to extend our relationship with Silver Lake to our transformational efforts of building an inclusive partnership with millions of small merchants while providing value to Indian consumers across the country in the Indian retail sector".

This marks the second investment by Silver Lake in a Reliance Industries' group company. Earlier, it had invested \$1.35 billion in Jio Platforms, becoming the first US private equity firm to invest in Jio, after social media giant Facebook purchased a 9.99% stake in the company in April.

Saudi Arabia's financial woes mean it's squeezing cash cow Aramco

Even with crude dropping below \$40 a barrel this week and its cash flow plunging, Saudi Aramco is trying to pay a \$75 billion dividend this year, almost all of it to the state.

The world's biggest oil company is getting squeezed by its main shareholder, the Saudi Arabian government.

Even with crude dropping below \$40 a barrel this week and its cash flow plunging, Saudi Aramco is trying to pay a \$75 billion dividend this year, almost all of it to the state. Concerns are mounting, including among global fund managers who bought into the company during a record initial public offering last December, that Aramco is putting strategic projects on ice and racking up debt too quickly. Aramco has been the country's cash cow for decades. But the pressure it faces has been thrown into sharper relief by the coronavirus-induced collapse in energy demand -- Brent crude fell another 5% on Tuesday -- and now that it's a listed firm with shareholders from New York to Tokyo.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the 35-year-old de facto ruler, has pledged to diversify the kingdom from oil and spend billions developing everything

from futuristic cities to tourism and financial services. For that, he needs Aramco's money.

"The crown prince has basically decided the company is a piggy bank he can raid to fund his other projects," said Jean-Francois Seznec, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council of Washington's Global Energy Center, and a Middle Eastern specialist. "It will limit how much they can invest in things like maintaining the oil fields and developing new technologies."

Dividend Promise

The government has previously leveraged Aramco's balance sheet to bolster its own finances. But it hasn't happened to this extent for at least 20 years, according to one banker who's worked with the company since the 1990s.

Fitch Ratings Ltd. estimates the Saudi budget deficit will rise to 15% of gross domestic product in 2020, one of the widest levels in the Middle East. The government's revenue fell almost 50% year-on-year in the second quarter. Aramco promised to pay

\$75 billion annually to investors for five years after the IPO. Eager to attract foreign funds and achieve a world record valuation of \$2 trillion, the government even said last year it may forgo its own portion of the dividend and maintain it for others if oil prices fell. Instead, the axe is falling elsewhere. Aramco has slashed capital expenditure by tens of billions of dollars, laid off hundreds of mainly foreign workers and shuffled its top management as part of a plan to sell some assets. It paid a dividend of \$37.5 billion in the first six months of 2020 even as rivals Royal Dutch Shell Plc, BP Plc and Eni SpA cut theirs. The payouts were almost double Aramco's free cash flow of \$21 billion. The dividends -- and a \$69 billion acquisition of chemicals maker Sabic from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund -- have bloated the company's debt levels, though they are still below those of most Big Oil firms. The gearing ratio climbed from -5% at the end of March, meaning Aramco had more cash than



debt, to 20% in June, above its targeted range of 5% to 15%.

Gearing could reach 30% by 2023 if crude prices remain below \$60 a barrel and Aramco doesn't reduce the dividend, according to David Havens, head of energy equity research at SMBC Nikko Securities America.

The market doubts oil will rise to that level anytime soon. Brent crude will average just \$47.50 next year and \$53 in 2022, according to the median forecast of analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

Aramco "has the lowest upstream costs of any major energy company," a spokesperson said in a statement. "This provides a level of flexibility in our capital spending plans during this downturn, supporting our ability

to maintain dividends."

The Saudi government's Center for International Communication, which fields inquiries from foreign media, did not respond to requests for comment.

Projects on Ice

Executives have shelved several major projects in recent months, including a \$20 billion Red Sea facility to turn crude into chemicals and a liquefied natural gas export terminal in Texas. A \$10 billion refinery in China has also been put on hold, Bloomberg reported, though Aramco said it's still committed to investing in the world's second-largest economy.

Aramco had hatched these plans to gain additional outlets for its crude and weather the global energy transition to cleaner fuels such as gas.

7 Indian-Americans in Forbes' list of richest people in US



The 2020 Forbes list of 400 Richest People in America has been topped by Bezos, 56 who has a net worth of USD 179 billion and has occupied the spot of the richest person in the US for the third year in a row.

Silicon Valley venture capital firm Khosla Ventures founder Vinod Khosla, Managing Partner of Sherpalo Ventures Kavitar Ram Shriram, Airline veteran Rakesh Gangwal and Workday CEO and Cofounder Aneel Bhusri. Rounding out the top five on the list are Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg on the third spot with a net worth of USD 85 billion, Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett, ranked 4th and with a net worth of USD 73.5 billion and chairman, chief technology officer and cofounder of software giant Oracle Larry Ellison, ranked 5th with a new worth of USD 72 billion.

President Donald Trump is ranked 339th on the list with a net worth of USD 2.5 billion. Chaudhry, 61 is ranked 85th on the list with a net worth of USD 6.9 billion. He founded ZScaler

in 2008 and the company went public in March 2018. Forbes said in 1996, Chaudhry and his wife, Jyoti, both quit their jobs and put their life savings to start cybersecurity firm SecureIT, his first startup. Wadhvani, 73 has been ranked 238th on the list and has a net worth of USD 3.4 billion. His Symphony Technology Group brings in USD 2.5 billion in annual revenues and Wadhvani combined nine of his companies that were AI-focused into a new group called SymphonyAI in 2017, Forbes said. An alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology and Carnegie Mellon, Forbes said the serial entrepreneur founded Aspect Development, which i2 Technologies acquired for USD 9.3 billion in stock in 1999. Romesh and his brother, Sunil, founded the Wadhvani Institute

of Artificial Intelligence at the University of Mumbai in 2018, committing over USD 30 million. On the 299th spot is Shah, 46, who has a net worth of USD 2.8 billion. Shah started the business in 2002 with Steve Conine, who is also a billionaire. Wayfair, which now offers more than 18 million products, generated USD 9.1 billion in net revenue in 2019, up 35 per cent from the previous year, Forbes said. Khosla, 65 is ranked 353rd with a net worth of USD 2.4 billion. Khosla cofounded computer hardware firm Sun Microsystems in 1982 and spent 18 years at venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers before launching his own fund. In June 2019, Khosla said he believes artificial intelligence could replace traditional industries such as radiology and music, Forbes added.

Seven Indian-Americans have figured in Forbes' list of richest Americans, topped by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos for the third year in a row. The 2020 Forbes list of 400 Richest People in America has been topped by Bezos, 56 who has a net worth of USD 179 billion and has occupied the spot of the richest person in the US for the third year in a row. Bill Melinda Gates Foundation Cofounder Bill Gates is ranked second on the list with a net worth of USD 111 billion. The richest people in the US saw their wealth swell despite the coronavirus pandemic's

devastated impact on the economy. "Pandemic be damned: America's 400 richest are worth a record USD 3.2 trillion, up USD 240 billion from a year ago, aided by a stock market that has defied the virus...Even in these trying times mega-fortunes are still being minted," Forbes said.

The list has seven Indian-Americans - cybersecurity firm ZScaler CEO Jay Chaudhry, Founder and Chairman of Symphony Technology Group Romesh Wadhvani, cofounder and CEO of online home goods retailer Wayfair Niraj Shah,

Cargo movie review:

Innovative but inert, Vikrant Massey's Netflix film wastes promising premise

Cargo movie review: Director Arati Kadav's Netflix film, starring Vikrant Massey and Shweta Tripathi, is ambitious in its ideas, but not in its execution.

Cargo

Director - Arati Kadav

Cast - Vikrant Massey, Shweta Tripathi

Debutante director Arati Kadav's homegrown science-fiction film Cargo, picked up by Netflix after playing at MAMI and almost playing at SXSW, is an innovative but inert mashup of Eastern ideas and Western storytelling. Like Masaan by way of Moon, Cargo is a film that explores themes such as reincarnation - or, more accurately, the corporatisation of reincarnation - and caste, all coated in a layer of slick modern sci-fi.

But while it might seem refreshingly original here, in an industry that has mostly stayed away from the genre, Cargo could feel massively derivative to certain audiences. Moon, for instance, is a film whose influence can be felt in virtually every scene.

Vikrant Massey's character, a 'rakshasa' named Prahastha, is having the same sort of existential crisis that was slowly consuming Sam Rockwell's miner in Duncan Jones' film.

For decades, Prahastha has been stationed in a space ship, where he readies recently deceased people for rebirth. He goes about his job with rigid precision as he attends to his 'cargo' - men and women who are usually reeling under the shock of having just died - almost like an Apple store technician working on a used MacBook, or an unemotional physician tending to his patients.

But Prahastha is neither an IT guy nor a doctor. If anything, he is a sad sap stuck in a 'sarkari naukri'. For company, he has another 'rakshasa' - a middle-aged uncle called Nitigya - whom he talks to via a CRT monitor. But things take

an unexpected turn when Nitigya tells Prahastha that he will soon be joined by an assistant. Prahastha protests. He is, as he has been projecting for over seven decades, a lone wolf.

The arrival of the youthful Yuvishka (Shweta Tripathi) brings a new energy not only to Prahastha's life, but also to the film, which in its attempts to portray monotony had become slightly monotonous itself. Tripathi is an effortlessly endearing actor, and her character is a nice foil to Massey's more stoic veteran. Solitude in outer space, as an idea, is just so ripe for drama that filmmakers can't help but return to it every couple of years, it seems. And although few will ever be able to come within sniffing distance of 2001: A Space Odyssey or Solaris, the recent Ad Astra and even Prometheus made some clever observations about loneliness.



But while Michael Fassbender's android in Ridley Scott's movie had the time and curiosity to contemplate his place in the universe, the fact that Prahastha is a demon really adds nothing to him as a person in Cargo. It's the equivalent of changing a character's ethnicity, but without their ethnicity having any impact on the plot. If the ultimate goal is to suggest that even mythological creatures are capable of feeling human emotion, then Prahastha, frankly, should have been more fantastical to begin with. Here,

he basically looks like Vikrant Massey. No pointy ears or nothing. Kadav also seems to have taken inspiration from comic books. There is an attempt at world-building that, while clunky in its execution, reminded me of Brian K Vaughan and Fiona Staples' brilliant comics series Saga. The lore, however, only weighs the film down. Did Cargo really need regular exposition dumps about human-demon diplomacy? Perhaps, if the information could've added something to the plot.

I'm Thinking of Ending Things movie review:

Charlie Kaufman's kooky Netflix film is a mind-bending trip

I'm Thinking of Ending Things movie review: Writer-director Charlie Kaufman's mind-bending new film demands repeat viewings, which is perfect, because it's on Netflix.



Charlie Kaufman's ominously named new film, I'm Thinking of Ending Things, with its lower-case title design, is cinema in all-caps. And perhaps the best breakup movie since Ari Aster's Midsommar.

After a career spent trying to piece together the broken fragments of the fragile male psyche, Kaufman, in his new film, introduces - for the first time - a female protagonist. But she might not be real. It's complicated.

Played by Jessie Buckley, the character - like most Kaufman characters - is essentially an

extension of the filmmaker himself. And as terrific as Buckley is as The Young Woman, a part of me would like to believe that she was cast simply so that Kaufman could add another layer of surrealism to his story. Buckley's co-star, you see, is Jesse Plemons, who plays the boyfriend, Jake. An equally valid counterargument could be made that Jake is the protagonist. But he might not be real either.

Casting two lead actors whose names sound exactly alike, to play characters that might be imaginary - all signs point to them

being constructs of a lonely janitor's mind - is the tip of the iceberg as far as the kookiness of Kaufman's film is concerned. In an opening scene that will remind viewers of Jordan Peele's comparatively more straightforward Get Out, we're introduced to the couple as they're on their way into the countryside to meet his parents. They've known each other for about seven weeks, but their relationship is new enough for him to ask if she likes Wordsworth, as if they're still discovering things about each other. She's contemplating dumping him, that much is made clear.

"I'm thinking of ending things," she thinks to herself during the endless drive to his parents', again and again and again. But while this initially sounds like a reference to their relationship, a later conversation about the writer David Foster Wallace gives the

words a rather morbid new meaning. "Even people who know nothing else about David Foster Wallace know that he killed himself," Jake tells The Young Woman, who nods. They might be the same person, or they might be Charlie Kaufman, having a conversation with himself, as he did in Adaptation.

I'm Thinking of Ending Things unfolds like a dying man's life, flashing before his eyes. On other occasions, it seems like the entire film takes place inside a snow globe that is slowly falling to the ground. There is sense of inevitability to it. Human beings, as The Young Woman says in one scene, are the only animals who understand the concept of mortality, which is why they've invented hope. At Jake's parents' house, The Young Woman visits his childhood bedroom,

which is littered with stacks of books and movies that he must have consumed as a kid. Here's where Netflix comes in. I'm Thinking of Ending Things benefits tremendously for having been released on streaming. In fact, it is in many ways designed to be viewed this way. For instance, when I first noticed changes in the physical appearances of Jake's parents - his father's hair seemed to have become shorter - I immediately paused and rewinded to reconfirm my suspicions. Moments later, of course, I realised that my eyes weren't playing tricks on me after all, and that a slight change in hairstyle was easily the most subtle transformation that the parents would undergo in that sequence. Similarly, the scene in Jake's bedroom positively begs you to pause and devour all the visual foreshadowing that it contains.

Kangana Ranaut hits out at 'Fancy feminists, Bullywood activists'

As the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday demolished "illegal alterations" at the Bandra property of actor Kangana Ranaut, she hit back saying 'My Mumbai is PoK now'. The actor has claimed that there were no illegal structures in her home.

Here are the latest updates:

Kangana says she purchased office building from Sharad Pawar's partner

She wrote in a tweet, "This was not just to me but to entire building and this is not my flat issue but a building issue which builder needs to deal with and this building belongs to Sharad Pawar we bought the flat from his partner so he is answerable for this not me.." Targeting "Fancy feminists, Bullywood activists, candle march groups and award vapsi gang," Kangana wrote that they have all stayed silent on "what High Court said about open murder of law and order in Maharashtra." She wrote in a tweet, "Well done, thank you for proving me right always, you all deserve the treatment you get from me."



Keeping Up With The Kardashians ending after 20 seasons

Keeping Up with the Kardashians, one of the longest-running American reality series, is finally coming to an end. The show, which made Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner overnight stars, will conclude in early 2021 after running for 20 seasons. "It is with heavy hearts that we've made the difficult decision as a family to say goodbye to Keeping Up With the Kardashians," said Kim. "After what will be 14 years, 20 seasons, hundreds of episodes and several spin-off shows, we've decided as a family

to end this very special journey. We are beyond grateful to all of you who've watched us for all of these years — through the good times, the bad times, the happiness, the tears, and the many relationships and children," she added.

Kim further said that she will "forever cherish" the wonderful memories she made during her show's run. Keeping Up with the Kardashians, which first aired in 2007, focuses on the personal and professional lives of the Kardashian-Jenner family.

It mainly focused on sisters Kim, Kourtney and Khloe Kardashian and their half-sisters Kendall and Kylie Jenner. The show also featured matriarch of the family, Kris Jenner, and Kourtney's on-off boyfriend Scott Disick. Kris' ex-husband, Bruce (now Caitlyn) Jenner was on the show until their divorce in 2015. Upon its debut, the show was an instant hit among the viewers and became a pop culture sensation. It catapulted the family to fame that helped them venture into fashion and beauty businesses. Kim said that the show, which ran on E!, played an important role in her life. "Without Keeping Up with The Kardashians, I wouldn't be where I am today. I am so incredibly grateful to everyone who has watched and supported me and my family these past 14 incredible years. "This show made us who we are and I will be forever in debt to everyone who played a role in shaping our careers and changing our lives forever," she added.



Sushant Singh Rajput's sister Shweta appalled at demolition of Kangana Ranaut's office: 'What kind of gunda raj is this?'

Shweta Singh Kirti, the sister of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, expressed shock at the partial demolition of Kangana Ranaut's office in Mumbai by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Shweta came out in support of Kangana and said that such injustice must not be taken lying down. "My God!

What kind of GUNDA RAJ is this? This kind of injustice cannot be a should not be tolerated! Can a President's Rule in Maharashtra be an answer to this Injustice? Let's establish RAM RAJ again. #WeDemandRamRaj," she wrote.

Shweta was replying to a tweet in which Kangana compared the situation to 'being burned at the stake'. "Today they have demolished my house tomorrow it will be yours,

governments come and go when you normalise violent suppression of a voice it becomes the norm, today one person being burned at the stake tomorrow it will be jowhar of thousands, wake up now," the actor had written. On Wednesday morning, the BMC began demolishing Kangana's office for alleged structural violations. However, the Bombay High Court stayed the demolition and said that the action 'prima facie does not appear to be bona fide and smacks of mala fide'. Kangana



claimed that the BMC officials threatened to demolish her office for being critical of the ruling Maharashtra government.

Last week, she criticised the Mumbai Police and compared Mumbai to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. She shared videos of the



Raveena Tandon hints if Kangana Ranaut and Rhea Chakraborty are 'pawns being used for dirty political vendettas'

Actor Raveena Tandon has expressed her anger at latest developments amid the ongoing investigations into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput and asked if two women are being used as mere pawns for political vendetta. While Rhea Chakraborty was arrested on Tuesday afternoon for procurement of drugs in relation with the probe being conducted by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), portions of Kangana Ranaut's Mumbai office were demolished by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation

(BMC) on Wednesday morning. Raveena tweeted Wednesday afternoon, "Crushing, Demolishing, Mayhem. Sad Sad. All that's happening. Two women, Two sides, are they being used as pawns to vent out dirty political vendettas? Murder, Nepotism, Suicide, Family, Grief, Mental Health, Mafia, Vendetta, Cops, Journalism, Politics, Drugs, Films. #JusticeForSSR shouldn't be diluted." Kangana had called the partial demolition of her office an act of 'fascism' and the 'death of

democracy', claiming that she was targeted for speaking against the Maharashtra government. Kangana warned Uddhav in a video message that his 'pride will crumble' soon and compared her situation to the Kashmiri Pandit exodus of 1990. "Uddhav Thackeray, did you think that you took revenge on me by colluding with the film mafia and demolishing my house? My house has been demolished today but your pride will crumble tomorrow. Time will change," she said.



"Any Trajectory" Possible In India-China Stand-Off, Talks Critical



Image credit: Google Terrain

(SAI Bureau) The present standoff between India and China "can take any trajectory," top government officials have told a TV Channel, indicating that the possibility of a conflict, localised or across the region, cannot be ruled out. The room for dialogue and engagement at diplomatic and military levels, however, has not been ruled out and another round of Corps Commander-

level talks has been agreed upon, though the date is yet to be decided. While expressing concern at the ground situation in South Pangong, officials said they believed that a war-like situation has not emerged as yet.

At the same time, it is believed that China's posturing along the frontier in eastern Ladakh "is being controlled by the top, not by some exuberant local commanders".

A TV Channel has also learnt of some additional moves made by the Indian army to secure heights along Finger 4 on the north bank of Pangong lake

in the last few days. Through this sizeable deployment, Indian soldiers presently occupy "heights overlooking the Chinese deployment on Finger 4". Any Chinese move to counter this would mean a Chinese deployment to an altitude of approximately 6,000 metres, or nearly 19,700 feet,

(Contd on page 30)

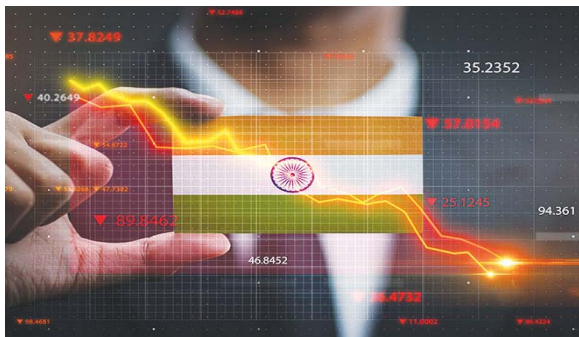
India needs a law to compensate the wrongly-imprisoned



(SAI Bureau) On September 1, the High Court (HC) of Allahabad passed an order declaring that Dr Kafeel Khan had been wrongly detained by the Uttar Pradesh government, under the National Security Act of 1980. The 42-page order of the court makes for damning reading. It points out that Khan was deprived of the material on the basis of which he could have made representations against his detention; on substance, Khan's 23-minute speech in Aligarh on December 12, 2019, which formed the basis of his detention, had been misrepresented by the police; taken as a whole, the speech was in support of national unity and peace,

(Contd on page 29)

So How Bad Is India's Economic Crisis? Brace Yourself.



(SAI Bureau) One does not need a weatherman to figure out which way the wind is blowing. Whether one goes by data or anecdote, that the Indian economy has been experiencing a contraction - rather than growth - since March 2020 has been evident from all accounts. It has been almost six months since the crisis broke, we are no longer using the strange term "negative growth," and are getting used to calling the change in GDP for what it really is: a contraction (imagine using the term "positive contraction" instead of growth when the economy turns around!).

Therefore, the recently-released estimates of the GDP for the first quarter (April to June) of the financial year 2020-21 by the National Statistical Office (NSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme

(Contd on page 29)

Trump Nobel Peace Prize nomination what you need to know



(SAI Bureau) Less than two months before the US election, President Donald Trump seems to have something to celebrate - a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. A far-right Norwegian politician has put Mr Trump's name forward for the 2021 prize, citing the president's role in the recent peace deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Christian Tybring-Gjedde told Fox News on Wednesday: "For his merit, I think he has done more trying to create peace between nations than most other peace prize nominees."

(Contd on page 30)

